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LIFE AND CHARACTER.

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LANCASHIRE
LIFE AND CHARACTER.

BY

FRANK ORMEROD.

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Preface.

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The present book is not concerned so much with an endeavour to trace the intellectual or industrial development of Lancashire, as with an attempt to illustrate the simple, everyday life of a people who, owing to their complexity of race and geographical position, have never been quite appreciated or understood by the outside world.

The books already written dealing with the county are many and well-informed, but no matter how ably statistics may have been handled, and however carefully historical data may have been compiled, they cannot supply us with those "domestic annals" which make the famous work on Scottish life and character so acceptable and illuminating. Dean Ramsay's object has been the present writer's own—"to preserve marks of the past which would of themselves soon become obliterated, and to supply the rising generation with pictures of social life, faded and indistinct to their eyes, but the strong lines of which an older race still remember."

Collections of homely Lancashire stories have, of course, more than once been made, but one feels that something more is demanded than the grouping together haphazard of humorous or other gleanings

without introducing proper atmosphere and background, and without suggesting the frame of mind which can throw a saying or incident into the right light and perspective. So, while the writer has aimed at something of the comprehensiveness of the witty Scottish Dean, he has taken for a model of form the well-ordered book on "Irish Life and Character," written a few years ago by Mr. Michael Macdonagh, who divided his work into numerous chapters, and, in giving many stories and facts to illustrate his points of view, succeeded in making the manners and customs and ways of thinking of his compatriots clearly understandable.

There is one enormous difficulty of which anyone who undertakes such a task must be sensible. This relates to the impossibility of giving the full hallmark to every story quoted. The situation of Lancashire, whereby it finds itself in close neighbourship with Ireland and Scotland, makes the distinction in some of the stories particularly hard to draw; and, consequently, the writer has had to be guided in the main by his own intimate knowledge of the people, and has included only those examples which are most characteristic and typical of the humour of the county.

F. O.

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CHAPTER I.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS.

With a world-wide reputation for travel and geographical enquiry, it is astonishing how limited is the Englishman's acquaintance with the main features of his own Island. Cook and Gaze and the "travelling scholarship" have done much to make him familiar with those countries across the narrow seas where people are accounted strange and ways foreign, but he continues to exhibit a lordly contempt or a chilly indifference towards those parts of his native country which do not lie within the bounds of his own immediate province.

The Northerner who goes to swell the great stream of humanity in the Metropolis has generally so little interest in his new surroundings that he neither cares to enquire what Parliamentary Division he resides in nor who the Member is who represents him; while to the South-countryman the land north of the Trent is practically unknown territory. Were the man of Kent or the West-countryman asked to give some idea of the diversities of character, the customs, or the industries of the North, he would in all probability find it much more difficult than to talk intelligently of Canada or Japan. Indeed, it is just possible that he would

be unaware of any sharp physical or social distinctions, it having for so long been the fashion to conclude that the railway and the telegraph have, in the cant phrase of the platform, annihilated space and welded together all sections and communities throughout the length and breadth of the land. The railway and the telegraph notwithstanding, the writer can point to places in the North where it is still customary to speak of a stranger from as far abroad as Norfolk or Suffolk as a "furriner," and has seen a pair of clogs in Covent Garden excite more interest and curiosity than the strangest garb worn by son of Mahomet or Confucius.

We have gone a long way since the time spoken of by Macaulay when there was as great a difference between Middlesex and Northumberland as between Massachusetts and the squatter settlements to the west of the Mississippi, and when half-naked women chaunted a wild measure on the heaths about Keeldar Castle, while the men with brandished dirks danced a war dance; but, for all that, the people of the North are in conduct, in modes of expression, in outlook, and often in personal appearance still very far removed from their countrymen in the South; almost as much so, in fact, as the Southerners are from their neighbours of the Latin race across the Channel.

Indeed, it is these differences and distinctions and the abounding misconception the Southerner shows of Northern men and manners, quite as much

as any desire to hold the mirror up to his own people, that have induced the writer to undertake his present task. The casual mention of common customs and affairs of everyday life in Lancashire, and rural Lancashire particularly, continues even now, at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, to be received with surprise and incredulity in less distant places than the Home Counties and the Southern shires, and the fund of romance, of folk lore and of humour, especially, fills with astonishment those who are accustomed to regard the county as a region where dwells a partly civilised people engaged in a stultifying and sordid industrialism.

The Southerner's knowledge of Lancashire when not lamentably meagre is grotesquely inaccurate. Cotton, he knows, is manufactured there, for do not the papers occasionally have paragraphs dealing with a shortage in the supply of the raw material, a boom or strike in the industry, or some great gamble in "futures?" But beyond that he knows nothing definite. It is probable that he may also at some time have picked up a so-called Lancashire story, wherein the novelist, speaking out of the fulness of a day's sojourn in Oldham, has written of Lancashire's "terrible destiny," of the slavery of her factory system, her poverty and grime, her shocking housing conditions, and the gross darkness and despair in which her people walk! And so, whenever the County Palatine is mentioned in conversation, he thinks shudderingly of foul smoke and the darkness of the pit.

There is, indeed, scarcely anything in which Lancashire is misunderstood so much as in her physical features. Speaking of his comely heroine, the writer of a well-known story says:—"One glance at her face would have made the dullest landscape in Lancashire look bright"—a form of gratuitous comment with which one often meets from those who know little or nothing of the county. It would be just as pertinent to say that Yorkshire is an abomination of desolation on the strength of a visit to Sheffield, or that London is a place of poverty and misery for the reason that it has an East End.

Writing in "Baily's Magazine" recently, Mr. Ernest Phillips put the case for Lancashire very well. He had ventured to compare a scene on the Lune with a reach of the Thames at Henley, and a group of Southern people had been surprised at his temerity. "But," said Mr. Phillips, "I held my own, and silenced my critics with one or two facts they had overlooked. Did they remember, I asked, that the whole of one side of Lake Windermere was in Lancashire? Did they remember that the Valley of the Lune, which no less an authority than Ruskin declared was the fairest vale in England, was also in Lancashire? Did they remember that the whole of Lake Coniston was in Lancashire, and that for thirty years Ruskin lived on the shores of that lake and beneath the shadow of Coniston's Old Man, as the mountain is called? And did they remember that the River Duddon, which Wordsworth immortalised in a whole series of poems, was a Lancashire

river? To be sure they did not remember these facts. They had imbibed the popular conception of Lancashire."

Mr. Phillips might have made his list much longer, and especially might have mentioned the whole of the historic Ribble Valley, with Pendle, Whalley, the River Hodder, and the wooded glens about Stonyhurst as equal to anything in the country, but enough has been said under this head to show that whoever contends that Lancashire has no natural beauties, traduces one of the most attractive counties in these Islands. The fact of the matter is that Lancashire, as Mr. Phillips indicates, has never, like Yorkshire and some other holiday counties, made a loud boast of her many beauties; she has, instead, rested her reputation upon her tireless industry, her labours for reform, her efforts for civil and religious liberty, her wealth, and her enterprise.

Much is made of the nuisance of smoke, but even in this respect Lancashire is hardly so black as she is painted. One is positive he has swallowed as much soot and smoke in some parts of London as ever he has in the busy towns of the North, and the writer has certainly seen more misery and wretchedness in homes in the Midlands and the South than he has in Lancashire. It is a notable fact that it is not factory people who dwell in slumland, or bring slums into existence; one must go to a stratum of workers much below the cotton operative for the dire evidences of poverty. The mill-hand is generally very fairly if very plainly

housed. As a proof of this, it is only necessary to mention one fact. Single-roomed tenements are only one per cent. of the total number of houses occupied by factory workers, whereas in London the proportion at the last census was fourteen per cent.

As the reviewer of a book on the housing problem said in "The Times" recently:—"The largest aggregations of people, the greatest amount of casual labour and poverty, and the worst housing conditions are found in the trading centres, not in the factory towns proper. The worst conditions of all occur in the old seaport towns; or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say did occur twenty years ago, for much improvement has since been effected. Even in factory towns the worst cases are in the more central areas of the older towns, built before the rise of the factory system; and these are matched by the poorer parts of many small and old towns of a totally different character, in which there has never been a factory or a large increase of population. Such towns may make a fair outward show while concealing far greater evils than are to be found in places, such as Oldham, which have truly been created by the factory."

Those who have a penchant for talking of the hopeless condition and environment of Lancashire workers can have little idea either of the situation of these towns—and it should be remembered that even in this workaday region only one-fourth of the county is given over to industrialism—or of the improvement that is constantly taking place

both inside and outside the factory. There is no doubt, too, that money is larger in amount and better distributed than ever it was, and that there are actually more working people "living retired," as the phrase goes, than ever before. There is not an old weaver or spinner living who does not vividly contrast the lean times of his youth with the comfort and luxury brought about by the factories of the present day.

No one will deny that on the whole the general conditions in the mills themselves are better. Despite the past indifference of the Legislature and the selfishness of parents, the workers in the textile industries have to-day not a great deal to grumble at, beyond the occasional tyranny of a tackler or the quality of the stuff they are sometimes asked to work up. Their hours are not excessive—a ten hours' day and a 55½ hours' week—ventilation, smoke abatement, and sanitation laws are being enforced on the masters; and the trades unions see to it that the wages are kept up to a satisfactory level. The working age for children, maybe, still leaves room for improvement in the interest of both individuals and the State, but the good people who try to make your flesh creep with stories of little children torn from their warm beds in the morning and sent through the cruel wind and rain to slave for unfeeling masters, hardly put the case fairly in the county's interest. They seem to forget that Lancashire is not the only place where young people have to start work early in the morning. The agricultural labourer's child has also to get up

with the lark, and, what is more, has no warm mill to shelter him. The lot of a Lancashire "doffer" or "tenter" walking a few hundred yards between home and factory is surely not more dreadful than that of the peasant lad going out into the fields while yet the cold mists lie on the ground and every implement he touches chills to the bone.

The fact of the matter is, there is a good deal of sentimental nonsense talked on the subject of the "cruelty" and "slavery" of the factory system of Lancashire. Ask these same factory people if they would change their present occupations for what is called the free, open-air life of the peasant. Would they be satisfied, does one think, with a chaw-bacon existence and twelve shillings a week? Would the men forego their high pay and town pleasures for the long daily round of the agricultural labourer, and would the women, having once enjoyed the fruits of four looms, take kindly to the scant raiment and scantier fare which are associated with the weeding of fields and the digging of potatoes?

One need go no further than to the servant girl question to point the moral. What is the real cause of the famine in serving-maids? It is not so much that girls receive worse treatment than they used to do, or that as a race we have become more independent. The servant girl wants more wages and more freedom, and to get both she, strange as it may seem, flies to those steam-driven workplaces that have been so much abused. To use their own phrase, servants will not be "cooped up," and they go for release to the spindles and the looms. They

prefer, rather than be household drudges from one Thursday night to another, to finish their work at half-past five each day, to be free from twelve o'clock on Saturday noon until six on Monday morning, to live on better food, and to dress like ladies.

Some critics there are who, selecting one or two places not at all typical of the county, have taken pen in hand and grossly libelled the whole community, charging the people with being sordid, immoral, and pitiably materialistic, their "authorities," perhaps, being those reports and statistics which alien and intensely-prejudiced ministers of religion are in the habit of making when their own inability fails to attract people to the churches. As one well-known writer recently pointed out, Lancashire has its vicious class in common with every other part of the country, but it has, too, in very goodly proportion, a class of quiet, thoughtful workers, steadfast in word and deed, total abstainers many of them, lovers of Nature always, frequently book-lovers also, and great readers of the Bible. These men, hale and hearty at the age of threescore years and upwards, are among the pioneers of the great social, religious, political, and educational movements of their day. "Such men," as the writer remarks, "are the backbone of Lancashire, and are to-day, in the opinion of those who know, its crowning pride and boast."

There is no doubt that the grim outward aspect of some parts of South-East Lancashire is decidedly misleading to the stranger, who often is quite unable

to reconcile a decent and self-respecting people with surroundings so dull and forbidding. Yet, speaking from an extensive knowledge of industrial England, one has no hesitation in saying that so far as either capability or morality is concerned the Lancashire factory folk compare very favourably indeed with any other body of workers in the country. If the hasty critic knew the kind of men and women who are to be found by the hundred thousand inside the ring of small towns and villages lying within a radius of thirty or forty miles of Manchester, and went into their clean and well-kept homes, he would have to confess that he had deeply wronged a manly, independent, and worthy race. Those who know the real factory people, know that they often carry their passion for thrift and cleanliness to lengths which are absurd and unwarrantable, while an illustration of their attention to the serious side of things is to be found in the fact that their churches and chapels are more numerous and their congregations larger than in any other part of the country. Every town, of course, has its idle and dissolute men and shiftless and sluttish women, but these are relatively few, taking the mill towns through and through. And the amount of open vice is an infinitesimal quantity as compared with what is to be seen in the streets of the majority of manufacturing and market towns which lie further South.

One is forced to admit that Lancashire men, to some extent, have themselves to blame for the evil reputation the county has acquired with outsiders.

In illustration of an argument that utilitarianism is the curse of the day, Mr. Raymond Blathwayt, the well-known interviewer, tells the following story:—"I stood once amid the ruins of the Acropolis. Athens lay round me sleeping beneath the stars, and the Parthenon, grey and classic, with its pillars silvered by a full moon and outlined against the purple silence, hung over me. A British voice broke the unearthly stillness, and the accent of Lancashire hovered upon the air. 'What a dom'd waaste o' good stoans. What a beautiful factory this plaace would 'a made.'"

That "accent" does not sound much like Lancashire, but, at all events, a similar remark was once overheard in the Lake District. After standing for some time looking down a lovely, well-watered valley, a holiday-making factory master exclaimed, "What an ideal site for a factory!"

Now, it might be argued that this was meant for humour, and that the man's presence in such a spot presupposes that he had a taste for natural beauty, but if the comment was only made as a set-off against the rhapsodic outbursts of his fellow-tourists, it was, to say the least, ill-timed, and very liable to be misunderstood. The county has accomplished so much that it can afford to be indifferent to its detractors, but until it openly takes a little more pride in beneficent Nature and a little less in strict utilitarianism, it will always be open to the gibes of the ignorant outsider.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the people are beginning to indulge in simpler and

more health-giving pleasures. They are not now content to save themselves for one great "bust" at Wakes or Rushbearing, but take every opportunity to enjoy outings and picnics nearer home. There are few Lancashire manufacturing towns which cannot boast excellent country within half an hour's walk, and the county, apart from its stimulating seaboard, has no lack of woods, plantations, and inland water, not to mention hundreds of thousands of acres of the finest moorland in the world.

Those who know their Lancashire as a whole, know that while commercialism must of necessity exact a heavy toll, it also brings a thousand benefits that working people in other parts do not enjoy; and they must also admit that, far from the Palatine embracing a dejected and despairing community, there are no cheerier or more courageous people throughout the length and breadth of the land.

CHAPTER II.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

LANCASHIRE is full of striking contrasts. The South-countryman thinks of it only as an agglomeration of factory and colliery towns, of tall chimneys belching forth black smoke, and where nothing is heard but the noise of machinery and the clatter of millgirls' clogs. Yet, away from the towns and the large stretches of moorland, lie rich lands where the best wheat is grown, the finest cattle pastured, and the noblest horses in the country are bred. Indeed, on the products of these lands, Lancashire farmers are able to hold agricultural shows superior to those of any other county, and one, at least, which is almost equal in size and quality to the Royal Show itself.

The county is disgraced in some of its towns by rivers which are little better than open sewers—cesspools of filth and abomination—but, on the other hand, there are rivers where fifty-pound salmon have been caught, and over a score of the most charming trout streams in England.

A stranger will notice, too, that while there is an "almost absolute content with the positively ugly" in the externals of some of the blackest towns, there is a scrupulous cleanliness in the houses themselves. Inside, floors and furniture will be speckless, whatever may be the character of the surroundings out of doors. But if there is little that is attractive about the piles of bricks and mortar in the manu-

facturing centres, the worker has the satisfaction of knowing that just outside the ring of smoke, and within the compass of a short tram or train ride, he can find unsurpassable beauties of hill and dale, of country lane and sylvan glade. This rapid transformation from the unlovely to the picturesque is a matter of constant surprise to the visitor—he can turn in an incredibly short time from the unyielding pavements of a grimy town to the springy turf and the heather-clad moors, or exchange the flaunting flowers in the shops for the modest bluebells and primroses in the cloughs and dells.

"Whatever there may have been in the past, there is little room for the roses now," says the writer of a newspaper article, on the strength of a few new mills built during a recent cotton boom, leading the outsider to believe by the tenour of his remarks that a factory accommodating a thousand or two of spindles requires the space of half a county instead of that of a decent-sized circus. That there is still room for the roses would appear to be indicated by the following little item of information, culled contemporaneously from another public print. It having been stated that the pupils of a school at Wigton had gathered 357 varieties of wild flowers, Mr. John Moss, the head teacher at the National School, St. Michael's-on-Wyre, Garstang, wrote to one of the London papers:—"We have for a number of seasons past been engaged in the collection and classification of the wild flowers of North Lancashire. This year we have so far gathered

and classified 368 varieties of flowers, forty-two grasses, and twenty-six sedges; and we are hoping, before the season closes, to increase this number by at least another fifty varieties."

When one leaves the lowlands, he is rewarded by some of the finest moorland scenery in England. The great Pennine Chain is a magnificent range, and on its westerly side throws out some noble spurs, many of the culminating headlands being of mountainous proportions. The moors are of large extent, and far from being the barren wastes that some imagine, are, with their ling, heather, and coarse grasses, their bright wimberry "clusters," their tinkling rills and "rindles"—so dear to the heart of Waugh and other writers—their nimble sheep, blending in colour with the greys of the rocky outcroppings, their bee and insect life, and their choir of larks and moorbirds, full of movement and colour. To go to the home of the grouse and the peewit, is also to find the finest of health-giving breezes. "There is as much difference between a walk in a Leeds or Sheffield or Preston 'park,' and a roam over the Pennine moors, as there is between a glass of champagne and a cup of cocoa," remarked a writer in the "Spectator" a little while ago, and, certainly, no highly-vaunted Spa is more efficacious for the reinvigoration of tired minds and bodies.

Of nearly every old-fashioned doctor living within sight of these moors is the story told of a simple and successful remedy for the benefit of some jaded patient. The story runs that an old doctor informed his patient that there was a herb growing

on the hilltops which was particularly desirable for the sick man's benefit, and invited the patient to accompany him in search of it. The two started and walked mile after mile across the breezy uplands, the doctor, to each enquiry, remarking that the place where the plant grew was further and still further on. At length, it is said, the patient stopped and protested. "I do hope it is not much further," he said, "for I am fearfully hungry." Whereupon the doctor exclaimed, "We've found it! We can turn back now," the mysterious herb of which they were in search being, of course, named "appetite."

That delightful writer on South-country life, "Son of the Marshes," is evidently one of those who cannot appreciate either the beauty or feeling of our splendid Lancashire moors. Describing a ramble in Surrey, he says:—"We have now reached the moor; but it is a Surrey moor, rich in vegetation and green turf, not a bare waste." In other words, the place he mentions is not a moor at all, but a piece of tangled scrub, such as one finds on the Witley Commons or on Hindhead, exceedingly charming in itself, but another thing altogether to the moor as understood in the North. Contrast the words of "Son of the Marshes" with those of a man like Mr. Augustine Birrell. In his book on Charlotte Bronte, he lays special stress upon the environment of the gifted sisters, and says: "Behind them, too, lay the Haworth moors, of all kinds of scenery the most permanently impressive, though whether it is to the earth or to the sky, to

the eye or to the ear we are most indebted, who but a poet can say?"

The mention of the Brontes and the hill country between Lancashire and Yorkshire, recalls a remark made to the writer by a London lady to the effect that she could not possibly accept as real the characters to be found in the stories written by the gifted ladies of Haworth; they were altogether too dour and forbidding to be English people.

In some of the remote, self-contained communities to be found amongst the hills dividing the two counties, where the older people still speak of an Englishman from another part of the country as a "furriner," and where one has often heard the remark, "Hoo's not this countrywoman," applied to the wife of a man who has come, maybe, from a remote part of the same county, there are to be found many characters quite as misanthropic, grim, and taciturn as Heathcliff; men who live silent, lonely, and perhaps miserly lives, and in the course of time become a terror to those about them. But the mistake must not be made that was made in another locality by the author of "The House with the Green Shutters," that these characters are typical, for in the out-of-the-way places we have in mind the bulk of the people are given to take life jovially and light-heartedly. The distinct Celtic strain generally found in such parts may lead, as it usually does, to a morbid habit of revelling in the dark side of things when the occasion offers, but the other characteristic of the race easily predominates,

and the village folk are always ready for a round of gaiety and festivity.

It is, indeed, in these isolated spots where the good old customs still linger, where friendliness and hospitality are more openly shown to strangers, and where open house is still kept at Rushbearings, Mid-Lent, "singing days," agricultural show days, and the like. It is under these hospitable roofs that one still finds the well-plenished "brade-fleighk," and can be regaled with the bannock, the jannock and the simnel, not to mention the delectable "thar-cake," indispensable at "brun-fire time."

It is on these "moorends," too, that the richest and quaintest humour still survives, and one can hear more homely philosophy and apt simile in a ten minutes' conversation than he can hope to find in a score of "country" novels. It is in these places that the "by-name" is still found; where a man, even if he be not called "Collop," or "Thraycle," or "Taypot," or "Smiler," will never be referred to by his surname, but will be familiarly known as Jim o' Gregory's, Tum o' Red Ned's, and so on. They are so fond of this style of address that they will employ all kinds of circumlocution to name a man. They will, for instance, when mentioning a cousin, speak of him as "Bob o' mi Aunt Sally's." There is no opprobium attaching to the "by-name" in most cases, and not to be dignified by a sobriquet is to argue yourself unknown or of no special account. A man with whom the writer was chatting one day, far from being ashamed of the odd name which had been tacked on to every

member of the family to which he belonged, proudly pointed out the "nick-name" by which his grandfather had first become known, although that name was taken from a common article of garden produce.

Whatever may be said of the younger generation, it is still the exception in these latitudes to find elderly people who have either read a novel or seen a stage play. In the one case, of course, it may be through lack of education, and in the other lack of opportunity, but in many it is neither the one nor the other, but simply due to a supreme indifference. Things not based on actual happenings they do not see any virtue in; they think them a waste of time, and refer to them as being "o' bullscutter." One finds the same characteristic in certain parts of Scotland. Once, in the neighbourhood of the Grampians, the writer came upon an old man who said he was a native of Kirriemuir, and questioned him on Thrums and its people. He kenned Barrie weel, and Davit Barrie, his father, also. And Barrie's books, how were they regarded by the people in his native place? "Man," was the answer, "they're just a' buff!" That word "buff" is untranslateable in English, but the gesture of contempt that accompanied its utterance left no doubt as to its meaning. Presumably, Barrie's delightful character sketches and humour were altogether too light and intangible for local consumption, and being neither theological nor metaphysical, were not worth considering.

An old Lancashire schoolmaster tells with relish many illuminating stories of the countryside, picked

up while "baby hunting" when registrar of births and deaths under the old regime.

Once, when filling in a birth certificate, he asked the mother for the name of her latest born, a male child two or three months old.

"Eh! we'n never thought of a name for it yet," she replied. "Yo' had a lot to choose fro' last time; happen yo'n one now 'at'll suit."

He ran over a number of good plain names, but none of them seemed to take the fancy of the mother. As he was rather pressed for time, the Registrar said hurriedly, "Well, what do you think of 'Arnold?' It is a name that has been chosen in another village where I have been to-day."

"Well, I dunnot know but what it'll do," replied the woman, and the name was duly entered.

As the Registrar rose to leave the woman said: "Just tell me again what yo' co'en that name, will yo'?" He did so, and for the mother's better guidance "printed" the name in bold letters on a scrap of paper he handed to her.

Some time after this a census clerk called at the same house, but was told that the form had not been filled up. The clerk, to save further trouble, offered to fill it up himself.

"What is your husband's name?" he asked.

"Sam'l," was the reply.

"And yours?"

"Mary."

"And how many children have you?"

"Four."

"And what are they called?"

"Well, there's Martha Ann, after both gron'-mothers; an' there's Robert, co'ed after mi uncle Bob; an' John, after John Bright; an' then there's t' babby."

"And what is it called?"

"Eh! I dunnot know. It's one o' them fancy names 'at a felly gi'en it, soon after it 're born."

"Well, surely you must know what you call the child."

"Nay; I never con recollect. When I want to know I look at this bit o' papper on't cornish," and she produced the slip on which was written the name "Arnold."

It would be difficult to find such an example of simplicity nowadays; indeed, the craze for fancy names for children has been carried to a ridiculous extent. One clergyman, some time ago, made a protest at the font, asking a woman of humble circumstances if she spent all her time reading novelettes in order to find names for her children.

Illustrating how the habit of swearing was rife in the country in the old days, the same schoolmaster tells of once going a walk over the moors with the Vicar of the parish, and calling in the lonely inn on the top for a cup of tea. The Vicar had his great mastiff with him, and the animal very quickly found its way into the taproom and began to fight with two or three dogs owned by quarrymen drinking there. "Lion! Lion!" called the Vicar, but the mastiff was too busy to pay attention. The delph-men looked round and saw a tall, saintly-looking

man standing in the doorway. "Eh! felly," said one man, "that'll do noane. Yo'll ha' to talk dog talk if yo' want to sunder um. Summat like this," and he went off into a round of savage imprecations such as not only sundered the dogs, but drove the parson in dismay from the room.

In the towns there is more "book larnin'" but less natural sagacity. Indeed, the facilities for self-improvement offered to the townsman are not surpassed anywhere. Municipalities, co-operative societies and mechanics' institutions enter into rivalry as to who can engage the best professors, technical instructors, art teachers, and lecturers on general subjects, and the free libraries provide the studious with the best of everything.

It would surprise many people to see how well-found these libraries are. Recently the writer, during some historical research work, visited the libraries in two important London suburbs, but found it impossible to get what he required outside the British Museum or one or two city collections not available to the general public. There were plenty of novels and light literature, but books of a more substantial character were very poorly represented. On subsequent application being made to the reference department of a library in a medium-sized Lancashire town, however, the whole of the books required were forthcoming.

But however advanced the towns may be in some respects, they are in others extremely old-fashioned and conservative. The open markets and fairs, for example, are in some places better and larger now

than ever they were. Shops may come and shops may go, but they do not seem to materially affect the outdoor stalls, which, almost every day in the week, spread their canvas coverings and display for sale every class of goods from greengrocery to ironmongery, from pills to pictures.

And it must not be taken for granted that all the articles offered are of the common or garden variety. Now and again the bargain hunter sustains a shock. This was the case in a South-East Lancashire town a little while ago when a frugal housewife, accompanied by her husband, walked up to one of the crockery stalls and, picking up a bowl, shouted across to the man in charge, "Hey, mister, what d'ye want for this?"

"Two pun ten," was the reply.

"What!" shouted the astonished couple; "how much dun yo' say?"

"Two pun ten," the man repeated; "how much did yo' think it would be?"

After a little hesitation the woman confessed to an estimate of half-a-crown, whereupon the vendor of "pots" responded, "Aah; but yo' see, this is real Crown Derby."

The other kind of fair—the one with its peripatetic shows and roundabouts—is, of course, peculiar to no age or clime, but there is no part of the country where it is a more popular feature at holiday times. Here, as elsewhere, the Lancashire man loves to exhibit his skill or strength in competition rather than indulge in mere passive pleasures, and consequently the booths set apart

for shooting, wrestling, boxing, swinging the hammer, and so forth, are always exceedingly well patronised. Despite what is said about the working folk of the county being stunted and degenerate, they frequently produce from their ranks men who defeat these travelling "champions," and nothing pleases them better than "taking down" the boastful wrestlers and boxers in these shows.

"Small of stature they may be," says one writer who understands the factory folk, "but they are tough and wiry beyond belief, and their powers of endurance would astonish those who put them to the test of fitness." This remark has been strikingly borne out recently by the critics of our new Territorial Forces. When the four battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers' Brigade, recruited almost exclusively from the mill hands of Bury, Rochdale, and Salford, reached Salisbury Plain for their first annual training, their appearance did not give satisfaction to those who, forgetting the lesson the little Japanese taught the world some time ago, still believe that none but giants can handle a gun. "There is no use in mincing matters," wrote one critic, "this brigade contains a terribly large percentage of immature youths, whose physical development leaves much to be desired." But when it was seen that these same lads were as fit as fiddles after long railway journeys, stiff marches, sleepless nights, and long abstentions from food, the critics began to change their tune. "They have already been well tested," was the later admission, "and they are a great deal better than they

look. The spirit is uncommon willing, and the flesh is far from weak."

The mention of the brawn and muscle of Lancashire men reminds one that the "reforming" demagogue also likes to talk of the mill folk as a short-lived people. Perhaps in a few trades, and notably those of St. Helens, Runcorn, and one or two other places which are not cotton factory districts at all, the mortality does not reach a very high average, but taking the county through it will compare very favourably with any other both as to the stature and longevity of its inhabitants.

"Married at Samlesbury Church, David Heys, aged 84, to Mary Whittaker, aged 84. The groomsman was aged 78, and the bridesmaid 93 years. The bride, to show her agility, danced a minuet during the wedding festivities." This interesting event took place a hundred years ago, certainly, but the chronological records contain a surprising number of similar entries up to the present day.

There are, contrary to the opinion of some outsiders, some fine specimens of manhood to be found in the mills. An old man of over ninety, who has worked all his life in cotton factories, was heard by a friend of the writer recently to challenge a much younger man to either run or wrestle. He was as hearty as a hare, his only infirmity being a little deafness. "Old stagers," who have worked nearly every kind of cotton machine, from the old hand-loom to the latest Northrop invention, are to be found in nearly every town and village. One such is a native of Radcliffe, near Bury, and is getting

close upon a hundred years old. She is the sole survivor of a family of eleven, of whom eight were octogenarians at the time of their deaths. As an instance of a certain kind of home fondness to be found in the North—natives know it by the name of "soil-sokken"—it may be mentioned, too, that the old dame has resided in the same house for ninety years.

There is a good story told of the eldest son of a Preston woman, the daughter of a handloom weaver, who only recently died in her 105th year. When 82 years of age he attended the village festival at St. Michael's-on-Wyre, and was there accosted by the Vicar, who said, "You're an old man. What is your age?" "Well," said the old man, with a twinkle, "my mother says I am eighty-two." "Your mother 'says!'" exclaimed the amazed Vicar. "You mean she 'told' you." "No," was the reply, "she told me the other day that I am eighty-two." Said the still incredulous Vicar, "Why, what age is she, if you are eighty-two?" "She's a hundred and three," responded the son, proudly. "Mrs. Kirby, of Preston—she'll be pleased to see you."

The writer knew two other octogenarians in his own district who used regularly to be fetched from the alehouse by their mother. Sometimes when she was seen going for the "lads," one would shout to the other, "Mother's coming!" and the two old men would make off out of the back door like frightened children.

CHAPTER III.

RACIAL TRAITS AND FOLK SPEECH.

COMMENTING on a series of able articles in its own columns, contrasting the people and industries north and south of the Trent, the "Times" some time ago said:—"Centuries have not wholly effaced local differences; some of these seem to become more pronounced than they were. The railway and telegraph are the shuttles which, swiftly shooting to and fro, weave into one fabric the national life; but the warp and woof not being all of one stuff, the texture and pattern remain very diverse."

The writer of these words might, in a very special sense, have had in view for the sake of comparison the county of Lancashire, for there is, perhaps, no other province of England which contains within its borders elements so varied in character. There are, of course, not a few counties which differ from their neighbours on minor matters of speech and custom, but there is not to our knowledge one that can show such strong racial contrasts within the circle of its own indigenous population.

In a book of the present character, which seeks to be more than half entertaining, it is not proposed to do more than touch upon the ethnological aspect of the situation. Sufficient to say that, apart altogether from the diversity of the human stream continually pouring through Liverpool's gateways, there are special racial differences which centuries of time have not eradicated, and which explain

many interesting phases of the native character. It requires no close observation to note that the inhabitants of the extreme East and North-east differ physically and mentally, not from their near neighbours in Yorkshire only, but from the bulk of the people in their own county.

While the County Palatine maintains throughout its length and breadth an even reputation for those qualities which make a sturdy and thriving people, the localities more particularly within the range of the blue hills dividing Lancashire and Yorkshire harbour a race of a temperament unlike that of the inhabitants of any other part of England, small portions of Cornwall and the hilly counties on the Welsh border excepted. They are to this day distinctly Celtic in many ways—a little lower in stature, perhaps, than their conquerors from the Elbe and Weser, but more lithe and sinewy, quicker-moving, and more fertile in idea and imagination. The fact that Lancashire on that side of the county is largely given over to factory work, with its heavy toll on bone and tissue, does not reduce the matter of physique to the level of direct environment, as active, small-bodied farm labourers are just as numerous as bulky spinners and "brawson" overlookers. It is to this Celtic race rather than to the Saxon element that one looks for homely humour and the preservation of the folk-lore, as well as for the expression in a racy patois of the thoughts and aspirations of the people. If further proof of this racial contrast be needed, let the interested reader note for himself the unusually large number

of words of Celtic origin to be found in the speech of what may be called the Lancashire hinterland.

The survival of this Celtic fringe is undoubtedly due to the fact that the easterly side of the county has been protected from the invader in two ways. The conquering Saxon, crossing the Pennine Chain from the Yorkshire side, presumably left untouched many out-of-the-way places in the hills to which Celtic refugees fled for safety; and its distance from the coast no doubt kept this hinterland longer than the rest of the county from the influence of the outside world. Many people remark that there is something of Dutch stolidity about the type of Lancashire man (and especially woman) to be found about Bolton and farther West, and are inclined to believe that the old Flemish weavers left behind them something more than their sabots. The Lancashire propensity for scrubbing and cleaning, they also surmise, is traceable to the old Dutch traits in their character, but the anomalies are much more capable of explanation by noting the distinct Saxon and Celtic characteristics in different parts of the county.

Speaking of a racial admixture in another part of the world, a distinguished writer says:—"They remind one of those ingenious pictures in which an animal or a human face is concealed so as not to be obvious on first inspection, though when once seen it appears to be the principal feature of the drawing. In the same way, one can live and travel in the Balkan lands without seeing or hearing anything of the Vlachs, until one's eyes are opened.

Then one runs the risk of going to the opposite extreme, and thinking, like Roumanian patriots, that most of the inhabitants of Macedonia are Vlachs in disguise." Read "Celt" in the place of "Vlachs," and the above exactly applies to the person on the watch for Celtic traits in Lancashire.

To those who think the idea a far-fetched one, let them go to the North of Ireland and see how the same elements have, through certain specific causes, been more distinctly kept apart. Owing to the bitterness which had its origin at the Battle of the Boyne having been kept alive from year to year, the Scotch and Irish have never to any extent amalgamated, and even where the English and Irish have come together, there has not been that fusion which time might be supposed to have brought about. It is quite easy to see the strongly-marked differences in the Presbyterian Lowland Scot, the Catholic Celt, and the type which is partly Scotch, partly English, and partly Irish. Inter-marrying and the influence of environment have done a great deal, but the intermediate class, while maintaining a distinctly Scottish cast of character, combine with their industry and thrift the "energy and grit of the English and the generous impulses of the Celt"—surely an ideal combination of qualities.

But while the pure, unadulterated Celt so often lacks industry and the sterner virtues, in Lancashire the amalgamation has so far advanced as to make the blend a most happy one for all social, industrial, and administrative purposes. It must be remembered in this connection that the process of blending

in the North of Ireland has only been in operation since the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's time—a matter of three centuries,—but in Lancashire it has been in progress for thirteen hundred years.

Still, the differences remain, the older race predominating in one part and the younger in another. In the Saxon localities there are generally to be found traces of the yeomen of an earlier day, and a class of people who, by reason of their thrift, industry, reliability, and transparent integrity, are the very salt of the community. From generation to generation they go on stolidly and unwaveringly doing their duty, making no conspicuous mark for the world's praise or blame, and yet doing a service for their country that cannot be over-estimated. Neither police courts nor county courts know their names, workhouses are not burdened with their kith and kin, and they loyally pay those dues which are constantly placed upon the industrious for the benefit of the blameworthy and the shiftless. They have for too long been rooted in one spot to think of going out to adventure in the world; more often than not the men stir not at all, but the women do now and then migrate to assist in founding families in the next village. War's alarms move them little; they are seldom fighters for the sake of the fun or the glory, and they contribute few of their number to arms as a profession. The material is good, however, when it is moved to the defence of a just cause, and history has shown that they can strike to some purpose when compelled by a righteous and mastering wrath. Being in them,

they conduct their quarrels very much according to the advice given by Polonius, but generally their good sense or a sufficient humour helps them to see that there are few things in the world really worth losing their tempers about. To political methods they look for the adjustment of their grievances and the bettering of their kind, and though bred to be extremely conservative in habit, they yet are among the most practically democratic people on the earth. They are staunch friends and helpful neighbours, hospitable to the last degree among their own, but showing little sympathy to the casual and the peripatetic. Beggars, for instance, make a poor living among such an independent folk, but genuine misfortune can be sure of a tactful and ready assistance.

And the common speech of the various localities differs almost as widely as physique and temperament. The Rachda felly speaks very differently from the Blackburnian, and the Wiganer from the Owdham chap. As a commentary upon these variations, and also in view of the remark already made as to the haziness of the Southerner's geographical knowledge, the following some time ago appeared in the "Pall Mall Gazette":—In last Saturday's "Black and White," remarks a correspondent, it is noted that "The Oldham banks paid £150,000 to the 'going-away clubs' last week, the result being that the Isle of Man is alive with Midlanders." "If 'Black and White,' he says, "ventures to claim Oldham as a 'Midland' town it will have to reckon with the irate Oldhamers (who,

by the way, wear metal-tipped clogs with hard wood soles and rigid toes). Oldham is the most characteristic of Lancashire towns; in it, more than any other, lingers the musical dialect which charms us in the works of 'Tim Bobbin,' Ben Brierley, and Edwin Waugh."

With the remonstrance one was, of course, in agreement, but in a contribution to the "Pall Mall Gazette" the present writer pointed out that there are many variations in the Lancashire dialect, and that a student of "Lanky," or what the people in Tim Bobbin's district call "Tummas and Mary," would hold that the lingo spoken by the "Owdham Roughyed" is not nearly so characteristic of the county as that used by either the "Rachda Bulldog," the "Yewood Monkey," the "Middleton Moonraker," or even the "Bowton Trotter." Continuing, the present writer said:—"As to the alleged music of the Owdham dialect, there, again, I join issue, as the sample has been too long in the smoke of factory chimneys and too little influenced by the richness and quaintness of the countryside to retain much of the charm it once possessed. Your correspondent would not find much of the 'I winno, I shanno, I canno, and I munno,' which is a typical Oldham variation, in the works of either 'Tim Bobbin,' Ben Brierley, or Edwin Waugh. Tim's writing is too archaic to be a criterion nowadays, and Ben Brierley's Boggart-Ho' Clough talk is of a stamp different altogether from that spoken at Mumps. Least of all does the author of that fine poem, 'Come whoam to thi Childer an' Me,' support

your correspondent's view. The well of language into which he dipped was a much purer one than that which supplies the dialect of Oldham. Its water was derived from the moorland rills, and sprang where 'yearth-bobs and scaplins' are more plentiful than the spinning mills which so disfigure the essentially modern town of Oldham."

One might go further and point out that the dialect, too, does something more than "linger," both in Oldham and other parts of the county, and that, despite all the talk of "better" education among the masses of the people. Board school English, the plain Lancashire man finds, is but a poor thing in which to express some of his shrewd wit and quaint humour, and thousands of those who have had the advantage of a higher education, and who ordinarily "talk fine," find the common language a most useful adjunct. One might almost be so bold as to prophesy that there never will come a time when the folk-speech of Lancashire will be discarded, for the simple reason that, unlike so many dialects which are but "English" with the addition of a few provincialisms, it is a full-grown language in itself, compact of the best and most forcible words that succeeding races of virile men have left behind.

Archdeacon Wilson, at the unveiling of the Dialect Writers' Memorial in Rochdale, made some interesting remarks on the value of dialect. "I know," he said, "there are high and mighty people who think that the working folk are commonplace and inartistic, and that all dialect, except, perhaps,

the Cockney, is vulgar. I would remind such people of Goethe's definition of good society. 'Good society,' he said, sarcastically, 'is that which affords no material for art.' Art and literature and poetry find their natural sphere in humble homes, in simple life, in every human feeling, and the use of dialect is, to express it briefly, of great assistance, if not indispensable, to literature for the perfect reproduction of simple life."

In the course of an interview dealing with his charming play, "Ragged Robin," Mr. Louis N. Parker put in a strong plea for the country speech of his Dorsetshire characters, and at the same time hit upon an anomaly which must have occurred to anyone who has the welfare of English dialects at heart. "It is rather hard," he said, "that one should be accused of making a story unintelligible the moment one attempts English dialect. You may use without offence any amount of Scotch, Irish, French, or even Russian accent, but the moment you use the language of the English peasantry you are bound to raise a storm of protest."

Yet it is so. People who will sit down cheerfully and read the stories of Barrie, of Ian Maclaren, of Crockett, will sigh and turn aside from the equally clear and strong, quaint and expressive talk of their own country folk.

But perhaps one can well understand how dialects become unpopular after glancing at the jumble of uncouth words which appear in some books and newspapers. Such expressions as are contained therein were never heard on sea or land, and there

is not a peasant in any county in England would recognise it as his own. So many of the present-day writers of dialect have, as Carlyle says, "none of the accents, outward or inward," of the people they write about, and they cannot but fail to make the folk speech acceptable to the ordinary reader.

Zola is credited with having studied the French peasantry for "La Terre" while driving through the country in a pair-horse carriage, and one can well believe this to be so. Contrast his superficialities with the clear insight and power Thomas Hardy shows in drawing his Dorsetshire country folk. Both writers bring their "realism" to bear on practically the same subjects, but the one does not speak with the same convincing inwardness of the other.

There is no doubt, also, that many dialects, and the Lancashire dialect in particular, have suffered as vehicles for both poetic and prose expression through a wilful perversion of words on the part of those who imagine that dialect writing is nothing but the building up of a fantastic agglomeration of letters. There can be no excuse in dialect writing for the "very indifferent spelling" which the friend of Charles Lamb commented upon when looking over a copy of Chaucer; all that is required is to render the speech of the people as nearly as possible into its phonetic equivalents, without making the printed page look like a veritable Chinese puzzle. Do what one will, accents and fine shades of pronunciation will still remain incommunicable.

CHAPTER IV.

MANNERS AND MORALS.

Observers have remarked, and remarked truly, that though the freehold tenure of land is not, and perhaps never was, extensively diffused among Northerners, they have much of the carriage and temper of a race of freeholders. This circumstance has, no doubt, led many to the conclusion that Lancashire folk are brusque and unmannerly when they have merely been displaying a natural independence. Had they known them better, they would have understood that there was not the slightest disrespect in their offhandedness.

It takes South-country people a long time to fully comprehend this trait. One can recall instances where Lancashire men of means have married wives from the South, and where these ladies, accustomed to something approaching servility from the village folk among whom they have lived, have for a time been greatly offended by the "boorishness" of their husbands' tenants or workpeople. In a little while they came to understand that Lancashire people take no one on trust, and that only so far as newcomers show themselves worthy of it, will respect and appreciation be meted out. Woe to such a lady coming into a North-country community and giving herself airs! Let her station be what it will, she will meet with rebuffs on every hand, and a thousand ways will be adopted of humbling her pride and showing her that kindly consideration must be mutual. She will have to find out from

experience that a nod from a "factory chap" walking along with hands in pockets is just as full of meaning as a touch of the cap from Giles, and there will be little or no ceremony about his mode of speech when addressed. Although she may consider herself a fine lady, she will in all probability hear of herself having been spoken of as "Owd Bob Bowton's wife," and her daughter as "that lass o' Bowton's."

But in one way, especially, is the newcomer's goodwill likely to be captured. She will find that if the words of the people about her are plain and blunt, they can, at least, be relied upon. She may, it is exceedingly probable, have acute recollections of the way tradesmen in the South do their business. She will recall that when she has required articles for stated hours, and has been assured with smooth words and due obeisance that they would be delivered at her house without fail, that she has scores of times been disappointed, and has been put to no little trouble and annoyance in having to send specially for the goods. At the village shop in the North matters will be reversed. She will be told offhand by the tradesman that he doesn't know whether he can send the goods or not—his boy is away on another errand and will probably not be back in time, or there is some other good and sufficient reason—but if the promise is made, she can, almost without exception, rely on it being fulfilled to the minute. In this and in a variety of other ways will she begin to see that there may, after all, be real worth hidden behind the plain

speech and stiffness of manner of these "Northern barbarians."

And yet, curiously enough, the Lancashire man, although he would scorn to bow the neck to any over-lord, and is moved to active resentment the moment any member of the landowning classes attempt to curtail his liberties, has, speaking generally, little sympathy with communistic ideals, and can be staunchly loyal to traditional dignity and power so long as they continue to be worthily represented. But towards the aristocracy of labour he shows little outward respect. Too many of these men have risen from the ranks, and he is too intimately acquainted with self-made men and their ways to be awed into subjection. Besides being as well born and as well educated as many of these men, he has constantly before him the old saying that "there's nobbut three generations between clogs and clogs again," and a turn of Fortune's wheel may very easily reverse the positions of employer and employed. Consequently, one often finds an old factory operative, say, familiarly addressing his master by his Christian name, or, where the latter has remained unspoiled by his prosperity, playing a friendly game of billiards with his employer at the village political or social club.

Your Lancastrian is a true democrat, but embodies the democratic idea in a very special way. A writer in one of the London papers some time ago pointed out, by way of illustration, that any such line of thought as led Mr. Keir Hardie to wear working clothes in the House of Commons was

incomprehensible to the Lancashire man. If he and his friends send a working man to represent them in Parliament, they expect him to be as well dressed and well behaved as any employer of labour. Why not? Is not he, they think, just as fit to wear good clothes, and just as well able to behave himself as any other M.P.? No levelling down for them, if you please, but as much levelling up as you like.

This ingrained sense of equality produces a candour which is quite extraordinary. Take, for instance, the retort of a lad whose parents owned a few shares in the mill where he was working. "Don't thee try it on again," he said to the manager, who had "clouted" him for some act of carelessness, "I'll ha' thee to know I'm one o' thy maisters!"

This illustrates the spirit to be found in many mills where the company system obtains, but in other cases opinion is expressed just as freely and forcibly. A certain cotton manufacturer who had been fined on three separate occasions for "stealing time" at his factory, was one morning talking to his coachman about the matter as they drove to the mill.

"I'll tell you what, Tom, that inspector seems to have his knife into me."

"Aah, I think he has," said Tom, "but I'd cure him."

"How would you do it?" eagerly asked the master, scenting a means of revenge.

"I'd do that 'at were reet, an' spite him," was the outspoken reply.

One day, an employer of labour in North-east Lancashire was sitting in his office when a tap came at the door. In response to his "Come in," a little grimy 'prentice lad came forward, and at once blurted out, "Heigh, Mister ——, I've bin sent bi't t'other 'prentices. We wanten a shillin' a week puttin' on our wages, an' less 'owd buck' fro' Petch!" Petch, it should be explained, was the foreman of the place.

Its outspokenness apart, the story would rank with that given by Judge Parry, of Manchester, as an example of Lancashire directness. His Honour, in an article in the "Cornhill Magazine" on "A day of my life in the County Court," states that on one occasion a woman entered the plaintiff's box and put her case as follows:—"I lent yon mon's missis my mon's Sunday trousers to pay his rent, an' I want 'em back."

Neither does the Lancashire man hesitate to express himself freely when he goes abroad; indeed, he is, if anything, much more aggressive when off his native heath, and, consequently, often succeeds in giving outsiders a wrong impression of Northern manners. Southerners are apt to judge him as he appears at an English Cup Final, when he will get himself up in silk hat and clogs and other outrageous things in order to deliberately shock the susceptibilities of the Londoner.

The county was full of stories of the way Lancashire people made their presence felt in the

Metropolis during the time the Franco-British Exhibition was being held. At the various theatres and music-halls in the West End, for instance, the crowds standing in the queues had many amusing experiences as a result of the Lancastrian's determination to hold the scales of justice evenly for those who were patiently waiting for admission. Where persons attempted to "put in" out of their turn, the visitors from the North were not content to compress their displeasure into a frown. They publicly made an example of the offender, and at least one Lancashire lass defended her position in front of a house of entertainment in the Strand with the aid of a good right arm. One Cockney, on the strength of his glossy silk hat and fashionably-cut frock coat, was attempting to push his way past the waiting crowd to the Tivoli pay-box when he was pulled up sharply by a man with a full-flavoured Chowbent accent.

"Here, Willie!" he shouted, to the great glee of the crowd and the utter discomfiture of the pushing individual, "Wheer arti gooin'? Just thee howd thi wynt, wilti? Thy place is among't Wiganers, somewheer to'ard t' back. Thee tay thi hook, an' bloomin' sharp!"

The police on duty at the Churchill wedding at Westminster could tell some amusing stories of their pertinacity. A crowd of Lancashire lasses happened to be holidaying in London at the time, and all the forces of law and order in the Metropolis would have been insufficient to keep them outside the charmed radius of St. Margaret's. They did

not get an opportunity to see a London wedding every day, and had set their minds on getting front places. To do this they alternately defied and cajoled the officers on duty. One young woman, on being told that she could not cross the way cleared for the carriages, said to the policeman, "I noather care for thee nor thi buttons. I've come to see't bride, an' I'm boun' to see her," and the officer, finding he could do nothing with such a determined young person, good-humouredly allowed her to go. Another young policeman found a soft hand slipped under his arm. Looking round, he saw a comely factory lass, who, looking up to him "with all her eyes," said, "Mun I stop here, just near thee? I'll be very good." Policemen are very human. The young officer succumbed to the smile and the blarney, and the lassie from Lancashire gained an exceptionally good place for sight-seeing.

At home it is the one with the heaven-sent gift of humour who can most readily pierce the armour of those who so jealously guard their rights and privileges. One young man, a bachelor, stepped into a grocer's shop one night and found it full of people waiting to be served. "Here!" he called to the shopman, "Just give me hawve an ounce o' thin twist. I connot stop, I've left t' chilt i't cradle!" In the general laughter, a way was made for him to the counter, where otherwise his presence would have been regarded as a gross intrusion.

But with all their sturdy qualities, the Lancashire people are in some things very easily "gulled."

The promoters of quack religions, curiously enough, often impose upon them, and the way they will, at times, follow their labour and other leaders into all kinds of false and untenable positions is really astounding. Cupidity, too, is a besetting sin amongst a great many. Too often, one is afraid, they are disposed to value a man for his purse rather than for his brains, his social qualities, or his goodness of heart. One often hears the remark, "Yon's naught—he's no brass!" ability, they think, being of little use to a man unless he uses it to enrich himself in this world's goods.

Their love of "making brass," and making it quickly, is so great that they appear to be ready to disgorge the savings of a lifetime at the bidding of any sanctimonious rascal and glib company promoter who comes along. Public proceedings in the courts often disclose this trustfulness and overconfidence on the part of the working people, and makes one wonder how anyone outside a lunatic asylum could have been duped with such promises of easily earned wealth and absurdly high dividends. And, yet, there is something to admire as well as to blame even in these indiscretions. A more cunning and suspicious people could not have been taken in with such ease, and many a time, as the result of some such palpable swindle, sacrifices are heard of which show the sterling stuff of which some of these Northerners are made. Not long ago a man with a wife and family dismantled a good home and "started at the bottom again," in order to refund to a neighbour some of the money that

had been lent to a fraudulent borrower through his advice.

The mention of working people's investments recalls the fact that it is in Lancashire where the dividend is exalted into a fetish. The county is the home of co-operation, and membership of "the stores" is within the reach of all who can pay ready money for their food, clothing, and furniture. Consequently, societies vie with each other as to which can offer the largest dividends and thereby secure the greatest number of members and the bulk of the trade.

Of late years the whole idea of co-operation has degenerated. A generation has arisen which knows not the aims and ideals of the originators, with their motto of "Each for all, and all for each." There is now a tendency to think more of the "divi." than of that mutual helpfulness and general educational and other advancement which influenced the pioneers of the movement. Perhaps this must necessarily be, seeing that the community appealed to is greatly altered in class, and that the membership nowadays is too large and too scattered to foster that idea of brotherhood and identity of interests which swayed the twenty-eight Rochdale apostles nearly seventy years ago. Outside the parent society, very little is done for either education or charity, and even the pioneers are being forced by a growing mercenary spirit to curtail many of their early enterprises.

Many stories are told to illustrate how keenly the people in some parts of the county look forward

to the prospects of "divi." at the end of the quarter, and how they will indulge in all manner of extravagances in order that their poundage shall not fall below the customary level.

"Who brought our new babby?" a lad is said to have asked.

"Oh, the doctor brought it," replied the nurse.

"By gum!" the lad exclaimed, "mi feyther will cuss when he gets to know it hasn't come fro't co-op."

It may be a libel on some villages to say that the inhabitants sit up all night eating and drinking to help to make "divi," but keen co-operators will go to great lengths to provide themselves with those alluring checks and tokens which are such a feature of this system of trading. A story is told of a woman who did not like a certain tub of butter standing on the counter of the "store" she patronised. "That's gradely bad butther," she said one day, "when will yo' have some fresh?" "That's what yo'll have to have, or noane," the shopman replied. "There'll be no moore till that's done." "Well, then," said this doughty co-operator, "let's ha' four pound; let's get it done wi'."

With the money accumulated and banked at the Stores, Lancashire people are fond of investing in cottage property; indeed, this mode of making use of their savings has become so popular that it is a common thing to hear men over their glasses say, "Well, here's another row of houses!"

The injunction never to judge a man by his coat,

it may be pointed out, applies especially to Lancashire, for it amounts to an affectation in some places for men of substantial fortune to go about garbed little better than Lazurus. Men can be found living in ordinary cottage houses and wearing caps and clogs who own quite important and extensive properties, many liking to appear quixotic in their style of living, and yet to hug the notion that they could, if need be, "buy up" their better dressed and more ostentatious neighbours. The community love to relate stories having reference to the eccentricities of these individuals, but where the making of money is regarded as so essential, one is afraid that many meannesses and all kinds of ill-manners are excused on the score of the wealth they have behind them.

Few things, one has to admit, appeal to the Lancashire man more strongly than good, hard cash. Just before Mr. Henry Smart, the distinguished musician, left his native town of Blackburn for London, a musical friend was discussing with him which he ought to take, a title or a pension. "You take the pension, Smart, and never mind the 'Sir,'" was the advice unhesitatingly given.

And, yet, one has all the time to remember, perhaps owing to those racial traits already spoken of, that Lancashire people, like the Scottish, have a distinctly romantic and sentimental strain running counter to their intensely practical nature. They can be as keen in matters affecting the main chance as any people in the world, and they can also be equally generous and chivalrous.

Those who have had dealings with the country folk know also that they are capable of the highest commercial integrity. They will drive a hard bargain, but once that bargain is struck they will hold to it at whatever cost. And they require no note of hand to keep them to their promises. Their word is their bond, and, in cases where they do not actually pass their word, the crossing of hands is sacred. Nearly all transactions affecting the agricultural industry, particularly, are carried out in this old-fashioned and honourable way, and the writer does not remember an instance where a repudiated bargain of this kind has formed the subject of a county court action.

A farmer, say, will go into one of the fairs and bid for a horse or a cow owned by a perfect stranger. The two will probably haggle for some time, the intending purchaser extending his open palm and inviting the owner of the animal to seal the bargain. When a satisfactory price has been reached, there is no production of books and writing materials; the bargain is "struck" by the seller bringing down his hand smartly upon that of the buyer. Delivery then follows as a matter of course, and the money is handed over without receipt of any kind. There are no suspicions as in the case of the townsman, contact with the soil evidently making for trustfulness and straightforward dealing. In the shops a receipt is required on the purchase of a few yards of tape; in the open-air markets a fifty-pound transaction requires nothing beyond a word or a gesture.

Occasionally, when a farmer or dealer finds himself in the Bankruptcy Court, some pert young lawyer will make much of the fact that no books have been kept, and will soundly rate the unfortunate man for his lack of "business" capacity. The man of law, with his mind centred on ledgers and day-books, finds no virtue in a system of trading based on mutual trust, and evidently lacks the imagination to see that behind the apparent looseness of dealing lies a fine trait of native character.

And the same trait must necessarily work for good in matters quite outside those concerned with buying and selling. Few things in recent years, for instance, have made the people of Lancashire more angry than the ignorant remark of a well-known Church dignitary, himself not a native of the county, that they were of a vindictive character, and the sort of people who would "carry a stone in their pockets for an enemy for seven years and then throw it." As a matter of fact, the Churchman had got hold of one-half of a saying which, in its fulness, would have conveyed exactly the opposite meaning. It is a saying used on both sides of the Pennine Chain, and runs, "A Yorkshireman (or Lancashireman) will carry a stone for seven years, *and then turn it over and carry it another seven years.*"

If ever a people were libelled, it was in attributing to them an attitude such as is supposed to be represented by the phrase, "Here comes a stranger; chuck hawve a breek at his yed." It was originally put down to Yorkshire, but it has also been said about Lancashire. Those who know either county

will be aware how absurd it is. A thousand instances could be given not only to refute it, but to show that quite the contrary is the truth. Northerners, as a rule, do not make friends so quickly as do the people in the South, but, still, one never yet came across a case where a stranger was treated badly simply for the reason that he happened to be a stranger. Indeed, there is a generally accepted proverb in the county to the effect that it is the stranger and not the native who attains to the greatest measure of prosperity.

Late one night, just as a train from Manchester to Rochdale was starting out of Victoria Station, a man rushed forward and entered a crowded compartment in which the writer was sitting.

"Does this go to Leeds?" the stranger asked of the company generally.

"I dunno," said one man, who might have been a loom jobber or overlooker, judging from appearances. "But I know it goes to Rachda, an' that's a piece on't road, tha knows."

"Well, this is about t' time 'at last Yarksher train goas, an' I'se ha' made a nice mess on it if I've getten into t' wrong 'un."

"Sit thi deawn, an' dunnot fret thisel'. Tha'rt gooin' to'ard whoam, shuzheaw o' be, an' if tha connot get ony further to-neet tha mun come an' doss wi' me. I'll find thi some ale afore tha goes to bed, an' happen some moore i't morning, too."

This episode between perfect strangers shows how utterly misunderstood the North-countryman is, and especially is it remarkable inasmuch as there

is generally supposed to be no great amount of love lost between the peoples of the two neighbouring counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Indeed, by all the laws of the game, one would never have expected anything of the sort from one to the other, for in theory the Wars of the Roses are still being waged with undiminished vigour. In practice, the jealousies and rivalries between the two counties are restricted to a little badinage, except, perhaps, in the domain of sport. There, as all the world knows, they are sworn foes. In cricket, especially, do they fight for supremacy, and scarcely a meeting of the two county teams takes place but some part of the ring of spectators is disturbed every few minutes by rival supporters getting overheated in argument and coming to blows.

"Dosti know why a Yorkshireman never buys mussels?" the writer once heard a Lancastrian ask. "Becose he connot eat shells an' o'!" he added, to the evident relish of a circle of friends who were ready to believe anything which would support their ingrained belief in the Yorkshireman's meanness and close-fistedness.

It is amusing to one who has enjoyed the generous hospitality of people on both sides of the Pennine hills to listen to what the Yorkshireman has to say of the Lancashire man, and to hear the latter brag of how he can "beat the Tyke at oather cotton or woollen." Just as the high road to England is said to be the finest and most appreciated view of the Scotchman, so the road over Blackstone Edge into Lancashire is regarded as one

the Yorkshireman never re-crosses once he journeys over to the, presumably, finer county of Lancashire.

The Yorkshireman, in his turn, is rather inclined to take credit for superiority on the domestic side, and considers his womenfolk unequalled in the management of a house. He himself is a great trencherman, and his standard of comfort is set by the cook. Possibly, the Lancashire woman does not pay quite so much attention to this branch of her work, but it is hard to imagine that anyone can be more devoted to the sheer drudgery of scrubbing and cleaning. There is a little more dependence than formerly on the baker's shop, the steam laundry, and on contrivances introduced to lighten labour, but even yet the business of "cleaning up" is pursued with passionate energy.

"When mun I come to see yo'?" said one woman to another.

"Well, dunnot come on Monday, for I've t' clooas to side."

"Will t' day after do?"

"Eh! nowe; that's weshin' day. An't Wednesday's smoothing day, an' Thursday bakin' day, an't Friday's clennin' up day."

"An' what about t' week-end?"

"Well, I'se ha' to goo an' buy in o' Sett'day, an' o' Sunday I allus go to't church, so I dunno gradely when yo' con come!"

It must, however, be admitted by those who are in a position to compare the conditions under which Lancashire men and women lived a generation ago, that some of the finer, stoical traits have disappeared

as the result of softening, refining, modern influences, and one seldom hears of the same feats of endurance, the same courageous battles with Nature, and the same grim devotion to an individual or a cause which characterised the people of an earlier day.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOMELY ARTS.

LANCASHIRE at work and at play gives the stranger vastly different ideas of the county and its people. Indeed, it is to the home and not the mill that one should go if one would really understand them.

Taking the country through, there is no class of worker so well housed as the factory folk of the North. They may not be able to recline under their own vine and fig-tree in their leisure, as do the people in the South, but within their own doors they have comforts in furnishing and luxuries in food and dress of which the agricultural labourer has little conception. What a Lancashire home lacks in external attractiveness is made up in cleanliness and good order internally. The Lancashire housewife is a model of the domestic virtues, and in the interests of her hearth and home she is often little better than a white slave. Untidiness and shiftlessness are the greatest slights that can be put upon her, and she will sacrifice all kinds of pleasure in order that everything may be shipshape in her own special domain.

In the country parts, especially, is this to be remarked. In the vast majority of cottage homes there is a most commendable neatness about everything. Whether one looks casually at the door-flags or more critically peers into the living-rooms opening directly on to the road, the effect is the same. The faces of the dressers, case-clocks, and

chests of drawers—the be-all and end-all of a Lancashire house-furnishing—are not more remarkable for their polish than the three-legged tables and pot-shelves for their scrubbed whiteness.

Two other things would also strike a stranger—the fine window display of geranium, fuchsia, and musk, and the unanimity in ornamenting "cornishes" and chests of drawers. Great care is bestowed upon the plants, which flower profusely, and are so encouraged to grow that it is no uncommon thing to find a window space packed with leaves and bloom until the window ceases to be regarded as a means of lighting the room, and the threading of a needle or the reading of a newspaper has to be done at the open door. Window gardening, as such, is little indulged in, but plant growing amounts to a passion with some of the villagers.

But the oddest feature is to be found in the ornaments referred to. They are of the big, white earthenware cat and dog order, without which no working man's house in country parts of Lancashire seems complete. The dresser is generally given up to the Family Bible with its crochet-work covering, but one is pretty sure to find either on a chest of drawers or a shelf over the fireplace a couple of clay-made pets which, so far as artistic merit goes, would make a South Sea Islander weep.

Recently, an attempt has been made to trace the history of the country through its homely pottery, and a theory promulgated that these crude clay ornaments and utensils are an unconscious survival of the Lares and Penates of the ancients. Some-

thing, no doubt, may be said for the theory, but one would not gather from the jesting allusions of the country people themselves that the fearful and wonderful things to be seen in many cottage homes are prized and revered with that habitual homage awarded by the Romans to their household gods. That they are prized is beyond a doubt, but there is none of the reverence for which the enthusiast contends. The native sense of humour comprehends too clearly the grotesqueness of the wall-eyed dogs and bandy-legged cats which are either surrounded by winking candlesticks and canisters or allowed to sit staring at each other with the brazen immobility of sphinxes. It is one of the commonest descriptive touches to say that a man with an obliquity of vision "skens wor' nor a pot cat," and homely observations are also plentiful which show that the Lancashire man himself by no means regards the ornaments as choice examples of ceramic art.

The menfolk, "when't wark is out o' their fingers," occupy their spare time in a variety of ways. Just as one would never dream that the fashionably-dressed girl to be seen about the streets of a Lancashire town on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday could possibly be the same he meets in shawl and clogs on Monday morning, so one can be wholly deceived in the pursuits of the men when the mills have closed their doors. There are, of course, still a few who occupy their leisure with "a dog in a bant and a pigeon in a poke," and a still larger number who make a fetish of

football, but it is the greatest mistake imaginable to jump to the conclusion, as so many people do, that the Lancashire man has not a soul above dog racing and ratting.

To take part in the geological and botanical rambles organised by associations of working men, and often led by working men themselves, would, for instance, be a revelation to outsiders; while the deftness shown in handicraft hobbies, and the amount of information at the command of some weaver or spinner student, would vastly astonish strangers to the county.

A "factory chap" recently called at the house of the writer with a message, and, attracted by the contents of a bookcase, began to make comments on authors and their works which indicated a wide and very choice range of reading. In addition, he proved to be learned in Nature's own book, having studied birds and beasts and flowers to no little purpose. His only regret was that the factory left him so little time to follow the bent of his own inclinations, but his holidays, week-ends, and evenings in summer were all spent in solitary rambles of observation. His taste in reading may perhaps be judged from the fact that when he left he carried away with him a volume of Maeterlinck.

This case is not by any means an isolated one, and the same love of education and self-culture is found among many young women who on six days out of seven run four looms and envelop their personal charms in shawls and clogs.

A splendid compliment was paid to Lancashire working women recently by the daughter of Mr. W. T. Stead, after a tour of inspection of one of the big Rochdale spinning mills. "I was," she said, "simply amazed at their intelligence and the knowledge they showed of subjects which are supposed to be quite beyond factory folk. I have never met such workpeople anywhere."

It would be difficult to enumerate half the things the Lancashire man has a liking for, but special mention ought to be made of two, gardening and music. In the towns, of course, the first-named hobby can be little indulged, but wherever a patch of ground, likely or unlikely, can be obtained in the country, there the native will plant his greenstuff and old-fashioned flowers, and tend them with untiring devotion. In quite unexpected places, on ground where one would scarce hope to raise a blade of grass, one comes upon gardens ablaze with daffodils and tulips, roses and sweet williams, asters and dahlias. The soil for the purpose, maybe, has been carried for miles, and all kinds of artificial means adopted to enable the gardener to bring his flowers and vegetables to the highest pitch of cultivation, and sometimes to beat all England in open competition.

Along with his inborn love of a garden, the Lancashire man has ingrained in his nature a desire to triumph over his neighbour in the quality and size of his products. A generation ago, before a Puritanical regime had robbed village life of much of its colour, the cottage gardener found encourage-

ment for his skill and industry in the various shows held at the inns all over the countryside. Well does the writer remember the festive days when shining copper kettles, brass preserving pans, silver teapots, and other prizes, all decked with coloured ribbons, were hung out of public-house windows on long poles to announce the annual shows and stimulate the growers of big gooseberries, monstre dahlias, and giant sticks of celery. They were days long looked forward to, and the competitions had the effect of promoting a very healthy rivalry. Sometimes a prize was offered for the best bunch of wild flowers, the longest willow shoot, or the best plaited stick of rushes; but many of the authorities, looking only upon the little extra conviviality which attended the exhibitions, and seeing no virtue in friendly contests which kept the villagers in touch with the soil all the year round or sent them into the fields and woods in search of the beautiful products of Nature, swept the competitions away, as they have done so many other simple and innocent pleasures. Shows are, of course, still held, but they are larger affairs altogether, and often held under conditions which give the villager little chance of success. He finds himself, maybe, in competition with a wealthy landowner or factory master, who can afford to spend any amount of money and employ trained gardeners, and a game played under these disadvantages soon begins to pall, let the cottager be ever so enthusiastic.

With such an embargo placed upon the cottagers'

contests, one naturally does not find so many fine specimens of fruit and flowers as formerly. With the exception of celery, possibly—and that in all likelihood grown on the moorends—the working man gardener is showing less and less pride in his garden produce. The dahlia "as big as a footbo'" and the gooseberry "about t' mickle of a gill pot" are now only memories, belonging to that bygone day the old-timers are so fond of recalling, when Owd Fossiker carried all before him with a stand of fruit and vegetables obtained surreptitiously from Manchester Market, or Jack o' Isaac's befooled the judges with his cleverly faked blooms.

The story of the last-named exploit will serve to show to what lengths some of the old gardeners carried their zeal for exhibiting, and with what skill they went about their work. Jack was a great grower of roses, but was sadly disappointed at one of the shows to find that some of the finest specimens he had ever exhibited had been passed over by the judges without even a card of commendation. He swallowed his disgust, but took the first opportunity of again entering some of his roses where he knew the same judges had been specially appointed to adjudicate. One fine bloom he staged immensely took their fancy on the second occasion, and without hesitation they awarded him the premier prize. Jack bided his time until the money had been handed over, and then carried the winning rose to the judges.

"Yo' thinken yo' known summat about a rose, I guess?" he queried, contemptuously. "Yo' known

about as mich as t' mon i't moon. Look here!" and he began to strip the petals one by one from the prize-taking flower. When he came to the middle, he put what was left into his mouth and ate it. "Yo' thought that wur a rose, didn't yo'? As it turns out, it wur nobbut a thing I built up missel' round a lump of toffy!"

In the matter of music, Lancashire is well and favourably known. But, curiously enough, it is not so much the upper classes as the working men and women who keep the light of musical culture burning, although there are many wealthy people who give it their patronage. During the visit of the Besses-o'th'-Barn Band to Paris a year or two ago, Mr. Alec Owen, their conductor, was asked by the representative of an influential newspaper for the secret of Lancashire's musical greatness. "Well," he said, "the reason is that the people, after working all day in the mills and factories, need some recreation, and so they turn to music. You find the members of a family taking up different instruments, and thus you have numbers of family orchestras. The keenness and enthusiasm of Lancashire people in anything they undertake make them excel in music."

Mr. Owen might have gone further and explained that fond as the Lancashire people are of instruments, they are a hundred times more devoted to the cultivation of vocal music. Yorkshire, we know, makes a boast of its pre-eminence in singing, but as one who has lived in both counties, the writer is inclined to think that Yorkshire produces more

musicians from the simple fact that it is a larger county, and that if a given number of voices be taken, Lancashire is quite her neighbour's equal. The competitions held by the Association of Competition Festivals show that Lancashire choirs and glee parties compare very favourably indeed with those of Yorkshire.

The Sheffield Musical Union, perhaps the finest combination of singers to be found in the county of broad acres, justly earned high praise on first visiting London a few years back; but when, later on, the Blackpool Glee and Madrigal Society followed them to the Metropolis and sang before the Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales, the critics were no wit less enthusiastic. Indeed, so highly-finished a select choir had not previously been heard in London, said one paper, while another remarked that "the choir of ladies and gentlemen is one of the best of its size we have heard for many a long day, and the manner in which the glees and madrigals, both ancient and modern, were sung was above criticism." The "Morning Post" spoke of the excellent material the Lancashire voices and musical temperament provided, and said that probably no finer choral effort had been heard before in London. "The Times" said the balance of voices was well-nigh perfect, and that only a choir composed entirely of skilled musicians could sing the eight-part songs on the programme with such wonderful precision and perfect sympathy. The "Standard," after remarking that the love for choral singing was fostered in the North of England to an

extent scarcely realised in London and the South, expressed the hope that the singing of "this famous Northern choir" would, by its strong musical charm, spirit, and finish, rouse among London's amateur singers a spirit of emulation.

One after another, the London press and the London correspondents of the chief provincial papers commented in the same strain, all bearing out the opinion expressed by the late Arthur Johnstone, one of the ablest critics of recent times, who wrote as follows in the "Manchester Guardian" some time previously:—"We have held a careful examination of conscience with a view to finding fault with the singing of the choir, or the selection of the pieces, but without success. There are not many choirs in the world that can perform such feats of unaccompanied singing, and the Blackpool singers are as strong in blend, balance, enunciation, phrasing, and style as they are in intonation."

It was to a Lancashire man—the Chairman of the Morecambe Musical Festival—that Sir Edward Elgar some time ago expressed such generous appreciation of the musical North. "It is rather a shock to find Brahm's part songs appreciated and among the daily fare of a district apparently unknown to the sleepy London press," wrote Dr. Elgar, who added, "Some day the London press will wake to the fact, already known abroad and to some few of us in England, that the living centre of music in Great Britain is not London, but somewhere farther North."

There is little doubt that Sir Edward had Man-

chester in his mind, for it is commonly remarked among vocal and instrumental aspirants that if they can creditably pass through Manchester they are "all right." Criticism is nowhere more outspoken than it is in Manchester, it may be remarked. The public wish it, and the powers that be encourage it. The work is well done, and everything is viewed, not through the spectacles of the London critics, who have sampled nearly everything beforehand, but from an original and unbiassed standpoint.

In the Blackpool Choir one has a good illustration of the way many famous bodies of singers in Lancashire are established and composed. Originally, it was made up of a few ladies' voices only, and met for practice at the house of Mr. Herbert Whittaker, their talented conductor. The following winter a mixed-voice choir of twenty-four singers was formed, and for a long time it was known by the simple name of "Mr. Whittaker's Choral Class."

Choral classes and glee clubs are to be found in every town and nearly every village. Where there is no public room or school the rehearsals are held in the cottages, and some remarkable stories are told of these gatherings in the old days, when the piano, for instance, had not become a common article of house furnishing. Then the only guide to harmony was the pitch-fork or tuning-pipe, and many of the musical signs, maybe, would be conveyed by means of poker thumps on the chimney back.

One of the old singers, in a reminiscent mood, lately told how devoted many of the working people in North-east Lancashire were to music in her youth. "Lads and lasses," she said, "would come straight from the mill for practice, and sing away until ten or half-past—and in those days it was half-past five at the mill every morning and no getting away until half-past eight at night."

Readers of David Christie Murray's novels will remember just such gatherings of homely musicians in humble dwellings in the Black Country—a part of England, by the way, where people show no little affinity with a certain class of Lancashire men and women in language, conduct, and many of their homely pursuits. The explanation, no doubt, is to be found in the fact that many ironworkers and miners migrate from one place to the other as labour conditions demand.

Lifetimes are absolutely devoted to music by some Lancashire men of the working class. Where they are not gifted with a voice or the ability to play some musical instrument, they will follow closely the fortunes of their pet choirs or brass bands. Visitors to the contests at the Crystal Palace and elsewhere often marvel to see working men following the performances music score in hand, and are astonished to hear their criticisms on the manner in which a certain solo or difficult concerted piece has been rendered.

After they pass away, some of these men are honoured by a reference on their tombstones to their special musical gifts or love of the art.

Recently the writer came upon the following in a country churchyard:—

Henry Clough,
Musician, of Norden,
Who died in this Church on Sunday,
31st January, 1888;
Aged 56 Years.
In music lived,
In music died.
No one who knew him need be told,
A warmer heart death ne'er made cold.

The inscription may not have great literary merit, but it is, nevertheless, a deep and sincere tribute to a talented and devoted musician.

One of these veterans, who was said to have spent a small fortune on music in his lifetime, always commemorated Handel's birthday by a dinner at his house, the occasion being marked by the musical friends present singing some of the principal numbers from the composer's works. Handel, it may be remarked, has always been a special favourite among Lancashire people, and in some parts a performance of "The Messiah" is as essential at Christmas time as the roast beef and plum pudding.

Many stories are told of the enthusiasm and ability of these musicians. "Eh!" exclaimed one man, very proud of his vocal powers, "if I were to lose my voice and have the whole town given to me it would be no gain!"

Musical people in Blackburn are fond of recalling a certain "Messiah" performance in which a local working man especially distinguished himself. It

was an occasion when Sir Charles Halle's famous band had been engaged, but not having a trumpeter among them, an overlooker named Thomas Hindle, the principal cornet soloist in the Darwen Temperance Band, was called upon to fill the vacancy. At the final rehearsal, Mr. Brandon, of Gloucester Cathedral, one of the principal singers, looked round for the trumpeter. "Oh, he'll be here directly," said the conductor, and while they were all anxiously waiting, the unmistakable sound of clogs was heard. They were worn by Hindle, who, having reached his place in the orchestra, pulled off his cap and threw it on the floor, tootled his instrument for a second or two, and in reply to the conductor's "Are you ready?" answered "Aah; brast off." Brandon sang and Hindle played, and at the close of the solo the whole of Halle's band rose and shouted "Bravo, trumpeter!" Indeed, although the great Levy was at that time considered unapproachable in the "The trumpet shall sound," all present agreed that they had never before heard the piece so well played.

CHAPTER VI.

PULPIT HUMOUR.

While Lancashire is widely known for its loyal adherence to the Established Church, and is one of the strongholds of Roman Catholicism, it also, on its easterly side more particularly, retains a good deal of the old spirit and simplicity of worship of the Puritans. Nonconformity flourishes, and this fact, while saying a good deal for the religious freedom and independence of the county, argues an ultra-democratic method of teaching and preaching which does not always tend to edification.

Of late years much has been done by Dissenting Colleges, and, of course, the general standard of education has been raised, but time was, and that not so very long ago, when the most lamentable ignorance was allowed to flaunt itself from the pulpit. As it was manifestly impossible for the few trained ministers appointed to a circuit to attend to all the chapels in their area, supernumeraries were, and are still, engaged to assist in preaching and conducting the services, the only qualification in former times, apparently, being that these men should be firm supporters of the particular shade of Nonconformity they had espoused, be regular and diligent, and be able by energetic speech and work to convince of their sincerity. The wildest blunders and the most grotesque statements could be pardoned if only there was evidence that the preacher "spoke fro' t' heart."

It was with a feeling that something more than native eloquence and good intention was required in the pulpit that "Ian Maclaren" (Dr. John Watson), the well-known Nonconformist minister and novelist, of Liverpool, once write in the "North American Review":—"Many dissenters yearly pass over from their own communions to the Church of England, because they are tired of extempore prayer and offended by its want of reverence; and, indeed, it may also be laid down as a principle that, when a person reaches a certain height of culture he will no longer be content to be at the mercy of, it may be, a partially educated person in the conduct of Divine worship, but will insist that culture, in the sense of imagination and delicacy, and reverence of thought, should render her higher service in the worship of God. The dissenting communions in England do not contain many representatives of the cultured classes, and, while there may be various reasons for this fact, undoubtedly one is their somewhat rude and miscellaneous forms of worship, compared with the stately order and the grave, sweet melody of the Prayer Book."

There are scores of stories told of odd sayings and doings of "local preachers," or "local Dicks," as they are often called in some parts of Lancashire.

Some time ago a new minister was appointed to a chapel in a town in North-east Lancashire, and the first Sunday he appeared to take up his duties one of the deacons rose and made an extempore prayer on the pastor's behalf. "O Lord," he is reported to have said, "give him th' eye o't th' eagle,

so as he con spy sin a long way off. Glue his honds to't Gospil plough. Tee his tongue to't line o' truth. Nail his ear to't Gospil pow. Bow his yed deawn between his knees and his knees deawn in some lonesome, dark, and narrow valley, wheer prayer is much wanted to be made. Anoint him wi't th' oil o' salvation, and set him afire! Amen."

Now this, notwithstanding that the name of the deacon was given, does undoubtedly appear "far-fetched," but a Nonconformist friend of the writer was present at a chapel on the outskirts of Rochdale some years ago when he heard something which, to say the least, was quite as absurd. Illustrating views similar to those taken by "Ian Maclaren," that it was impossible for educated people to sit and listen to some of the men who were given authority to preach, he related the following story:—

"The man who had been told off to preach on this particular Sunday was a converted street sweeper. Before the sermon 'portions of Scripture' are read, and in our church it is the custom for the parson to make running comments on the various points which arise in the chapter. It happened to be one of David's exhortations to praise that was chosen on this occasion, and the preacher had not got through many lines before he became hopelessly stuck. He had evidently not met with the word 'psaltery' before, and could neither pronounce it nor make head or tail of the verse in which it appeared—'upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.' Again and again he went over the few

words leading up to 'psaltery,' sometimes audibly and sometimes with only a movement of the lips, and then a bright idea striking him, he read it out as 'Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the pääsle tree!' Not content, however, with making such a ridiculous blunder, he needs must draw a picture, a la the Rev. Peter Mackenzie, of David sitting in the 'pääsle tree,' playing his harp with one hand and holding on to the tree with the other, praising God with all his heart and soul!

Near where the writer lived as a boy, one of these lay preachers stopped suddenly in the middle of his sermon one Sunday morning and, to the astonishment and amusement of his congregation, audibly remarked as he gazed abstractedly out of the window across the sunlit meadows, "Aah, I know what my wife is doing just now. Hoo's peeling ox-noble podditoes, wi' seet holes in as big as saucers!" Then, recalling himself by striking his elbow on the ornamental brass of the pulpit lamp, he said, "Eh! I didn't know wheer I wur just for a minute!"

Some of the extempore prayers referred to were inordinately long and, it must be admitted, very wearisome. The story is told that at one chapel near Darwen an old man, named Benjamin Walmsley, was in the middle of a prayer when another man pulled his coat tails and said, "Ben, tha's gone far enough." Ben was accustomed to pray for something like twenty-five minutes or half an hour at a time.

While the education and training of the clergy

make it practically impossible for elementary blunders to be perpetrated in the Church of England, there are, of course, no end of quaint stories concerning the doings and sayings of parsons in out-of-the-way country places.

In one breezy upland parish the writer knows well there lived in the last generation a vicar who figured prominently in the annals of the countryside, and deservedly earned something more than a local reputation. Though in a remote spot, his church was very largely patronised for christenings, weddings, and funerals; indeed, the saying of one cynical old woman in the district that "some folk 'ud sanner *dee* if they could be buried at that church than *live* onywheer else," became to be generally recognised as expressing better than anything else the almost passionate attachment shown for the place by a large section of the people of the countryside. The parson, a gentleman of the old school, was as popular as the church, and none of the functions for which the place was specially famous would have been considered complete had he not accepted the universal invitation to join the interested parties in a friendly glass afterwards.

Following his homely custom, he one day went into the public-house with a christening party, and was asked what he would have in the way of refreshment. "I'll take a glass of whiskey," he replied. When the glass was empty he was asked to have another, but this he declined, remarking that he never took more than one at a time. The party being unusually convivial, he was pressed

again and again to break his rule, but to no purpose. "I will tell you what you can do, however,' he added, to the astonishment of his entertainers, "you can chalk me one up for another time. It is bitterly cold sometimes when one lands on this hilltop!"

A quaint story is told of the Rev. Robert Nowell Whitaker, a former Vicar of Whalley, son of the historian, and himself "a character" and a man of ability. Preaching one cold, frosty morning, he brought his sermon abruptly to a close. "Dearly beloved brethren, I will say no more this morning. Too cold. Now to God the Father."

Many stories are yet told in and about Bolton of a remarkable old cleric named Parson Folds, who flourished in our grandfathers' days. On one occasion he was approached to preach the annual sermon in connection with one of the yearly walking days, or festivals, of a local sick and burial society, and was asked what his fee would be. "A guinea," said the clergyman. The deputation, however, being economically minded, asked if he could not do it for less. "Well," replied the parson, "I could do you one for half a guinea, but it wouldn't be worth a damn!"

Many stories are told of "Owd Rathbone," a former Vicar of Ashworth, a rural parish lying on the hill sides between Bury and Rochdale. One day the Vicar, while on a raft in the middle of a pool, had the misfortune to slip and fall into the water. Opportunely, Jone o' Jeffrey's, a humorous old carter made famous by Edwin Waugh, hove in

sight with his horse and cart and fished the parson out again. Jone was thanked and went his way, but at the next alehouse at which he called he published the incident, with no few embellishments, and finished up by remarking that the parson "would ha' bin i' hell i' two minutes, if I hadn't just bin comin' past."

The remark was too good to be lost, and finally it reached the ears of Rathbone himself, who enjoyed the touch of humour immensely. One day Jone, who had come to know that the clergyman had been informed of his comment, was greatly concerned to see the Vicar walking towards him along the Bury highway. He looked right and left for a way of escape, but there being none, he made an attempt to avoid a meeting by walking on the farther side of his cart. The Vicar, however, did not intend that his victim should get away, so he stepped into the middle of the road and came face to face with the carter.

"I say, Jone," he called out, "where should I have been if you had not seen me the other day?"

Jone sheepishly hung his head. Then, raising his roguish face, he said, "I guess yo' known!"

The parson had again a hearty laugh at the incorrigible, and showed his friendliness and goodwill by turning back and standing old Jone a pot of ale at the first public-house they reached.

Jone, by the way, liked to have a shy at the parsons. One hot summer's day, when going for an "out" with a crony, a clergyman got into the same compartment of the railway carriage, and from

enquiries the reverend gentleman was heard to make on the platform before starting, it was clear they were all bound for the same destination. On the way the parson, overcome by the heat, fell asleep, and was still blissfully unconscious when the train stopped at the station he wanted.

"Hadn't we better wakken him up?" asked Jone's companion as the two rose to get out. "I yheard him ax for this station."

"Nowe; let him alone," said Jone, "he isn't wanted till Sunday!"

At the church where Mr. Rathbone ministered there was a sexton who was quite an original character. The story is told that one very wet summer the Ashworth farmers, finding their unripe grass laid flat with successive storms of wind and rain, and the time for harvesting well advanced, went as a last resort to the parson. The following Sunday morning a prayer for fine weather was offered up, much to the disapproval of the sexton, who, following the Vicar into the vestry at the close of the service, said, "It's not a bit o' good, Mr. Rathbone; yo' met as weel whistle as pray for fine weather while t' wind stops i' Windle Nick!"—a gap in the hills towards the south-west.

Protestant and Puritan though the county is, taken in its entirety, there is, nevertheless, no part of England where Catholicism flourishes as it does in the County Palatine, Preston (or "Priest Town," as it is believed to have formerly been called) being a particularly notable centre of Romanism. That the "old religion" was even more widely spread

over the county than at present is indicated by the use of many words which come from Roman Catholic sources, but which now have an odd sound used by Protestants. One, for instance, often hears a Lancashire housewife, who could under no circumstances be induced to put her head inside a Catholic chapel, call to her offspring, "By t' Mass, Joe, I'll breighk thy yed if tha doesn't come here!"

She has not the remotest idea of the origin of the words she is using, just as Protestants who make a special point of attending church on the Sunday following the funeral of a relative or friend have no notion that they are following a long-established custom observed in the Roman Catholic Church. "Pace egging," a species of Easter mummery which has now lost all religious significance, also, no doubt, has reference to the old custom in the Roman Church attached to "pasque" or paschal eggs. No eggs were formerly eaten by Catholics between Shrovetide and Easter Day, and the removal of the yearly ban in Lancashire, at all events, seems to have been marked by special rejoicings. How the play of St. George and the bold Slasher came to be adopted one can only surmise, but each company of mummers still includes a "Dirty Bet," who carries a basket for the collection of eggs—when something more acceptable in the way of current coin of the realm is not forthcoming.

In another sense, Lancashire is extremely catholic—that is, she shows an almost excessive zeal to embrace all the "fancy religions" that

are going. Revivalists find the people amazingly responsive, and it is on record that the first English convert to Mormonism was baptised in the Ribble at Preston.

Every great preacher, from Wesley downwards, has testified to the religious zeal of the people of the county. Not long ago Bishop Thornton paid a striking compliment to one particular section. "The working men in Lancashire," he said, "attend church in large numbers. They are not afraid of the collection; they even demand it. They listen to the sermons like Trojans, and sing like nightingales."

In these days, when there is such a marked decadence in preaching, the Bishop may be thought to be unduly optimistic, but what he said on another occasion no doubt supplies a key to the situation. "A shepherd," he remarked, "is no good without a flock, and a church shepherd, especially in Lancashire, has got to be a shepherd, and not a drover who walks lazily at the back of the sheep, shouting angrily at them, and with a barking dog. My experience and observation have been that in a British parish the lay people are only too ready to come forward if a parson of the right kind is obtained to show them the way."

Possibly, if we had the "sermon tasters" of an earlier day the preaching, which is the most often complained about, would be improved. It is told of one of these worthies that he never missed a sermon for years at the church he attended, and did not hesitate to speak his mind on every and all

occasions. Once, and once only, the preacher tried to silence this persistent critic. As he left the porch one Sunday noon, the old man, who was waiting as usual, sauntered up to open fire. The preacher, however, anticipated him for once. "Well, John," he remarked by way of greeting, and then immediately added, "How is it, though I displease you week after week, that you still keep attending my church? Why don't you stay away?" John was simply staggered by the suggestion. "What!" he gasped. "Me stay away! If I stopped away there's no telling what sort of stuff you'd be preaching!"

With Bishop Thornton's statement about Lancashire congregational singing one is in hearty agreement—anyone who has attended a great men's service, especially, will not soon forget the effect of those powerful, musical voices—but many people will be inclined to discount a little the remark about the collections. It is a fact, nevertheless, that Lancashire congregations can be exceedingly liberal when occasion demands, and nowhere do they get such bumper collections on "singing days," harvest festivals, and the like, or raise such large amounts at bazaars.

Bishop Moorhouse, of Manchester, had many complaints to make about "coppers in the collection," and on one occasion said to a Manchester audience, "Rich people give pennies. I have seen it myself when I have been in the congregation. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. It does not mean self-sacrifice."

In the Colonies it was the threepenny-bit that

was his "particular foe," and his contempt for that coin brings to mind an incident at a missionary meeting in Bolton, when a man who was a bit of a character in the town was in the chair. Moved by the addresses of the missionaries, he appealed to the audience to give liberally. "Those who intended to give sixpence must give a shilling," he said, and after advising them all round to double their contributions added, to the consternation of the ministers who flanked him on the platform, "And let's have none o' them d——d threepenny-bits!"

Apropos of collections, many people have had the experience of accidentally dropping into the bag or box a coin of much greater value than was intended, but few, we should imagine, have been treated with the consideration of one working man at a chapel the writer knows. This individual found to his dismay when the collection was about to be taken that the smallest coin he had in his pocket was half a crown. He could ill afford to give away so much, and yet was loth to pass the collection over, especially as the old gentleman carrying the box knew him well, and might, he thought, consider him very mean. So, heaving a sigh of resignation, he took out the coin and dropped it into the box. The deacon, a courtly old man, grasped the situation at a glance, and, without a word, put his hand into the box and handed back to the astonished workman two shillings in change.

The mention of half-crowns in the collection reminds one of the tale of an old Lancashire verger who was seen by a new Vicar to take half a crown

from the plate before presenting it at the altar rails. After service the Vicar spoke to the verger, saying how sorry he was that he should have found him guilty of such an act of sacrilege. For a moment the verger was bewildered at the charge. "Whaw," he said, when light dawned on him, "yo' dunnot meyn that owd hawve creawn o' mine, dun yo'? I've led off wi' that for fifteen year!"

Among the stories told by the clergy, are many which indicate that the ceremony at the baptismal font can have its distinctly humorous side.

One Lancashire canon the writer knew, a man greatly beloved by his people, never hesitated to exercise a genial autocracy when he considered it would be for the good of his flock. Sometimes he carried his authority to great lengths. When parents presented their children he might, for example, refuse to give them the fancy names they desired. "Gwendoline Cicely!" he would exclaim when some plain woman of the working class presented her infant and attempted to make both herself and her offspring ridiculous, "Tut, tut! That won't do. Call the child Mary Ann." And "Mary Ann" she had to be.

Once, at a Rochdale church, when the vicar asked the sponsors to name the child, he was told "Ananias." "And whatever made you choose such a name?" asked the astonished vicar. "Don't you know that Ananias was a person who was a great liar?" "Well, we wanted a Bible name," was the innocent reply, "an' we thought that would do as weel as ony."

At another church known to the writer, a christening party put in an appearance and said the name they had chosen for the infant was "Luke." "Let me see," said the Vicar, "I have christened you two other boys, have I not?" "Yes," replied the parents, "and we had them called Matthew and Mark." "Well," remarked the Vicar, "bring me John to complete the list, and I will return you all the fees you have paid." John followed in due course.

Scriptural names, so far as whole families are concerned, are now not often met with. One of the jingles one heard in childhood had to do with the old-time custom of christening children according to Biblical rotation. It told how

> Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
> Lived in a little house just above Bacup;

and that

> Abraham wan and Isaac span,
> And Jacob ran about with a little kitty can

What Jacob's occupation was, was always a matter of wonderment, and even now one can only conjecture. He would appear to have been what a certain well-known humorist would call "the saftest o' the family."

Among a host of christening stories which Lancashire folk are fond of telling is one of a curate who was in the habit of always giving a preliminary address to the sponsors. One day he took an infant in his arms and became enthusiastic as to its possible future. The child might, he observed, prove to be a second Disraeli or Gladstone, a

Bonaparte or Wellington, an archbishop or a great missionary, the Lord Mayor of London, a Pasteur or a Jenner. Then having duly impressed the sponsors, he asked them to name the child. The answer came with something of a shock. It was "Martha Ann!"

There has never been in Lancashire, as in Scotland, that unseemly wrangling among the members of the more rigid sects consequent upon the introduction of instrumental music into the services of either churches or chapels. Over the Border many good stories are told of the manner in which the stern, unbending Dissenters have opposed the installation of "the sinfu' kist o' whistles," but when one has heard of objection being taken in Lancashire, it has come, curiously enough, from Churchmen rather than from rigid Nonconformists. Some of the Low Churches to-day are only a shade better provided with music than the Quakers themselves, while Dissenters show such a fondness for music that they will so far forget their religious animosities as to borrow numbers from the masses composed specially for the Roman Catholic Church.

A quarrel as to who shall play an organ will sometimes divide a Nonconformist congregation so sharply as to lead to the formation of a new sect, but the question as to whether there shall or shall not be music at the services never arises. The native love of music in every form places the matter beyond discussion, and both dissenters and Churchpeople had their special galleries for fiddles and reed instruments long before organs were thought

of for purposes of divine worship.

A story is, however, told of one old dame, an irreconcilable Low Churchwoman, who put her objection very humorously. Having by mistake got into the pew of a regular seatholder, the verger went and beckoned her to come out, just as the harmonium started a somewhat lively voluntary.

"It's no use axin' me," she said, making a pretence of being in a place of an entirely different character. "Yo' mun get somebody else. I connot dance!"

CHAPTER VII.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

It is stated in the "Cavalier's Note Book" that "a man who exhibited a dromedary in 1662 told Mr. Blundell, of Crosby, that he found more profit there (in Lancashire) than in any other county. John Butler, the mountebank, bore the same testimony."

Lancashire people have always been particularly devoted to sports and pastimes, though it must be admitted that their tastes have not always been so tame and innocent as the showman and the acrobat seem to suggest. Up to a time much later than when that dromedary went galumphing through the land, the country villages of Lancashire were disgraced by exhibitions of brutality such as one will hope were not equalled in any other part of the realm. We refer in particular to that form of savagery known as the "puncing match," in which men of enormous strength and great agility were pitted together in cold blood, often for quite paltry stakes, to kick each other with iron-bound clogs until one or the other was either disabled or killed. Many a victorious combatant has had to flee the country after one of these contests to escape arrest for manslaughter, or lie in hiding for weeks and months on the moors until the law has relaxed its efforts to lay them by the heels. By comparison with this "sport," bull-baiting and cock-fighting seem peaceable occupations, and wrestling, dog-racing, and pigeon-flying merely children's games.

The "puncing match" and the baiting of bulls are, of course, unheard of nowadays, but many of the old forms of sport are still to be found in out-of-the-way corners of the county. In colliery districts, especially, do they indulge in cock-fighting, dog-racing, trail-hunting, and wrestling; many of the wrestlers, indeed, having within the past few years challenged and beaten some of the best-known men in the world.

Despite the ban which the law has put upon it, there is still a lingering love of cock-fighting, for which our fathers showed such fondness. The outskirts of Rochdale were at one time very notorious for the sport, but since one or two of the old worthies passed over to the great majority, one has not heard so much of the "cocker." Occasionally a raid reminds the outside world of its existence, but few are aware of the extent to which it is yet indulged in. Breeders of game fowl still find the occupation a profitable one, and those "in the know" are able to see many a good "main" of cocks without going very far out of the sound of town hall bells. Owing to the activity of the police, however, it is becoming every year more difficult to bring off these brutal matches, and the mountainous country of Cumberland has recently become a more favoured rendezvous of the "fancy." Nowadays cock-fighting finds its most numerous devotees in the mining districts of South Wales, and outside these islands the United States and Canada have an unenviable notoriety for these battles of the birds.

That other old sport which so often went with

cock-fighting—pigeon-flying—has lost little of its popularity, it having been modified in form rather than discarded. Where it once was considered disreputable to carry a pigeon in a basket for a couple of miles and throw it up within sight of its own cote, it has now, by taking the bird across the Channel into France, become a sport in which a person of the highest morals and tenderest conscience can indulge. Homing has become extremely popular of recent years, but, for all that, the man with the little basket of birds is yet frequently to be met with on the country roads, walking with an energy worthy of a better cause, and covering scores, and even hundreds, of miles in order to try and win a prize of a few shillings. Some of these men do nothing else for a living but train pigeons for various competitors, and not long ago the request of an old pigeon fancier that a homing pigeon should be killed and placed in his coffin was carried out at his burial at Rochdale. The man had been a pigeon flyer for nearly seventy years, and had walked thousands of miles in pursuit of his hobby.

Many stories could be told of the keenness of the pigeon-flyer. On one occasion a question arose in a mill as to the speed at which an engine was working, and a deputation was sent to the master to ask him to slow down a little. The master questioned the statements made to him, and added, "I never knew one of you chaps who ever had a watch fit to time an engine."

"What!" cried one of the men in amazement, "Sithi, this watch here is one as 'll time a pigeon,

never name a engine!"

It is told of a Wigan collier that a friend one day met him walking along the street with a large eight-day clock in his arms. "What's up!" asked the friend. "Arti flittin'?" "Nowe," was the reply, "I'm nobbut gooin' deawn to't bridge to time a pigeon!"

One of the tales current in a certain neighbourhood where the writer lived concerned a well-known character who, being one of a number of mourners at a funeral, excused himself for a few moments as the procession was passing his house, in order to take a peep into his cote to ascertain whether one of his favourite homing pigeons had returned.

The mention of homing pigeons calls to mind the story of a famous Lancashire bird that could give points to most long-distance flyers. The owner, whom we will call "Red Ned," was constantly boasting of what his pigeons could do, so "Owd Pinbow," one of his bosom friends, decided to humble his pride.

Having made up his mind to go to London one Rushbearing, Pinbow said, "What does ti say, Ned, if I tak' one o' thi brids an' chuck it up somewheer nee wheer't King lives?"

"I should be some weel plest," said Ned. "Tha con tak' that blue hen an' wuz it up i' Siberia, if tha likes; it'll come whoam fro' onywheer. Nobbut tha mun throw it up i'th oppen air, fair an square, an' not let it out i' one o' them tunnels they sen London's chock full on."

"O reet," said Pinbow, and the following Friday

night he called for the pigeon-basket and took Ned's flyer with him.

Outside St. Paul's Cathedral he threw up the bird, but before doing so plucked out some of its long wing feathers. In consequence it had, as Pinbow put it, "no moore fly in it nor an owd soo," and he went back home chuckling at the thought of Ned's prospective discomfiture.

As soon as convenient, he called round at Ned's house and asked if the pigeon had landed.

"Not yet," said Ned, with all the confidence in the world. "Give it till Settherday."

At the end of the week Pinbow was round at Ned's house again and asked the same question.

"Aah, it's comed," was the reply. "I towd thi it 'ud come."

Pinbow is good at acting, but he opened his eyes as big as saucers. "Comed!" he said, with surprise.

"I should think it has," said Ned. "It's a champion is yon hen. I knowed it 'ud come whoam some road. Some heawnt (and he looked hard at Pinbow) did his best to stop it, but a twothri fithers are noane gooin' to make ony difference to a brid like mine. It couldn't fly it, so it walked it, an' it's turned up here this mornin' wi' corns on it feet that thick—!" and Ned measured off a good three inches of his big, fat hand.

In the old days Lancashire sport relied to a great extent on the public-house for initiative; now, there are a hundred outside influences at work to civilise the pastimes of the people. Wherever one looks, one finds that the forward movement of education

and social betterment is making itself felt here as elsewhere, and there are nowadays few of those drunken, rowdy scenes which, until close upon the end of the nineteenth century, disgraced village life in the county. The writer, as an inquisitive boy, has seen and heard things on the old playing fields, or "crofts," which used to be adjuncts of every alehouse, which to-day would be absolutely impossible. These grounds are to be seen nowadays beautifully laid with turf and bordered with flowers, innocent bowls having taken the place of the quoits, the jumping weights, the wrestling rings and the other old-time things which, somehow or other, used to be so provocative of foul language and brutal strife.

The natives of a former generation seemed to have quite an Irish love of a fight. Never a Saturday night passed but gangs of young fellows made their way from the country villages into the towns to get drunk and have their weekly row. If they could not get anyone to quarrel with in the public-houses, they would in all probability deliberately assault a constable or watchman in the streets, with the result that there would be some stirring police court proceedings during the following week, and much hard swearing.

"Hasti fowten?" queried one man to his mate as they made ready to leave the town late one Saturday night.

"Nowe," was the reply.

"Well, get fowten, an' we'll go to'ard whoam!"

This story is not at all deprecated by those who

knew the kind of individual who went out for his weekly fuddle a generation ago. Nor does the following, told of two lifelong friends who were sitting smoking together on one occasion, exaggerate the pugilistic nature and quaint humour of some of the people.

"I'll tell thi what, Bill, win bin mates a long time, hannot we?"

"Yigh, we han that an' o—moore nor forty year."

"An' win never had a wrang word, han we?"

"Nowe, we hannot."

"Well, what's ti say to a bit of a row for a change!"

"O reet; I'm noane pertic'ler."

"What shall it be, a feight?"

"Aah; that'll suit me."

So the story goes that these two boon companions doffed their coats and hammered each other for a good half hour "just to show there was no ill-feeling."

One of the old brigade to whom we are alluding sat occasionally as a model for an artist friend of the writer. Often in the studio he recalled the doings of his early days, and appeared to be especially proud of the number of ratting matches he had won.

"Eh!" he one day enthusiastically exclaimed, "I've seen t' time o't day when I've won as mich as ten pound wi' rattin' i' one Sunday mornin'!"

"John, John!" said my friend, in mock reproof, "However do you expect to get to heaven after going ratting on a Sunday?"

"Eh!" said the old man, complacently, "that'll make no difference. It's so long sin', They'll ha' forgetten!"

To quite understand the sporting side of the Lancashire character, one has to remember that the inhabitants are a hard-working people who take few real holidays; indeed, their ingrained devotion to work contrasts very strongly with what one is accustomed to see in some other parts of the country. It may be said that they live to work, not work to live, and it is an open question whether they know what enjoyment in its truest sense really means. They have always been addicted to wild and boisterous sports, and always there is a strenuousness and hungriness in their methods of play which one never meets with in the South. They take special delight in the sterner pastimes, with the result that a game like football is much more popular both to take part in and to watch than cricket and some of the gentler sports. In saying this, one is not forgetting how well cricket, and county cricket especially, is followed and patronised. But the Lancashire man's explanation of this would be that he took interest in cricket simply because it happened to be impossible to play football all the year round, and, also, because he is an admirer of skill wherever he may find it.

One often hears lamentations from the pulpit and elsewhere on the degeneracy of a manhood which devotes itself so whole-heartedly to football, and certainly it is not a pleasant thought that so many have deserted the playing fields in order to

look on and yell at Scottish champions bought to make an English holiday. But, on the other hand, it may be argued that the football craze has done much to stop the pigeon-flying, dog-racing, and gambling that used to take place on Saturday afternoons, and that the men who follow football are a much more sober lot than formerly. Instead of going from the shop and factory to the alehouse when they have finished work, as in the old days, they now go home, wash, dress, and have dinner, and spend the afternoon in the open air and in places where there are few if any facilities for getting drink.

There is no doubt that the love of the game at the present day amounts to a passion, and that there is hardly a section of the community but is carried away with the prevailing enthusiasm. The fortunes of the clubs and the traffic in players are everywhere discussed; old and young, men and women, all being absorbedly interested in watching the progress of the various clubs struggling for places in the League, or fighting for the distinction of going to the Crystal Palace to compete for the English Cup.

Some amusing instances of the extent to which football monopolises boys' thoughts were given at a Sunday school convention held at Preston some time ago. A class being asked who Paul was, one boy promptly answered, "Full back for Swinton." One teacher, explaining the miracle of the loaves and fishes, asked if his pupils had ever seen twenty thousand people together. "Oh, aah," replied a

boy, "When Blackburn Rovers played Preston North End."

On one occasion a group of loafers were standing at a street corner in Blackburn discussing the prospects of two men who were that day being tried on a charge of murdering an old man in a neighbouring town. It was a case which had greatly excited the community, and every edition was eagerly bought up. Presently a lad came flying down the street from the newspaper office with a bundle of papers under his arm containing a telegram to the effect that one man had been sentenced to be hanged and the other had been acquitted.

"What's the verdict?" cried one of the loafers, who had, the lad knew, no intention of buying the paper.

The youngster was evidently a football enthusiast. "One each!" he shouted as he dashed round the corner.

Some exceedingly funny remarks are heard on the football grounds. In one match a young dentist playing for one of the teams was making a dash down the field when one of the spectators roared out, "Goo on, Joe. If tha scores a goal I'll have a tooth drawn!" On another occasion, when Preston North End were playing in an English Cup semi-final, a little man had the misfortune to get to the match late and had to be content to stand behind a group of tall Prestonians. It was in the days before football grounds were banked up, and all the little man could do was to watch for the ball as it was occasionally kicked high into the air, and listen

to the shouts all round him of "Play up, North End!" "Play up, North End!" The little man stood it as long as he could, and then yelled, "Play up, oather end! It doesn't matter. I con see nowt!"

The devotees of cricket are also very keen, although the game is not fostered to the same extent as in the neighbouring county of Yorkshire. The story goes that one young fellow, who had been playing as substitute in a match, was approached at the close of play by the captain, who asked if he would play again the following day. "Well, I should ha' bin wed to-morn," was the reply, "but I con put it off!"

Cricket, as everyone knows, was the ruling passion of Crossland, the famous Lancashire bowler. It is told of him that he once met J. W. Carmichael, the East Lancashire amateur bowler, in one of the main streets of Blackburn, and began to rate him for his part in a match in which the East Lancashire club had sustained defeat. "Yo' should tak' yo'r time when yo'r bowling," said the veteran. Then, running to a provision dealer's shop, in front of which stood a basket of potatoes, Crossland returned with a handful, and immediately commenced to bowl them down the street to show the amateur how to "do it." The shopman was soon upon the scene, and it was not until then that Crossland realised that he was bowling stolen potatoes.

Crossland was unusually blunt in speech, both on and off the cricket field, and many stories are told of his witty sayings. On one occasion when

playing at Whalley, a clergyman came to the wickets to meet Jack's fast expresses. Crossland, on being told who he was, said, "Well, here goes his bloomin' pulpit!" And sure enough, the first delivery uprooted the middle wicket, and the reverend gentleman retired to the pavilion amid suppressed laughter. Another well-known story was that relating to a Nantwich publican, who was hit on the leg by one of Crossland's fastest deliveries. On the instant he walked off the pitch. The umpires shouted to him to return, explaining that he had not been given out. "Well," called back the publican, "whether I'm out or not, I'm going out!"

In the course of his reminiscences, when bringing to a close his political representation of Bury, Sir Henry (now Lord) James told a cricket story which might also stand as a good example of juvenile impudence. One day Sir Henry was appealed to for a subscription to assist in starting a lads' cricket club. The subscription was sent, and the matter quite forgotten, when by post one morning came a letter. It proved to be from the same lads, who explained that they had not, after all, got enough money to start a club, and so had decided to spend what they had collected in an outing to Belle Vue. They had, accordingly, been to Belle Vue, but had spent there rather more than the collected money came to. Under the circumstances, and knowing that he was a gentleman who would not care to see any club with which he was connected in debt, would he kindly send along the balance!

The Lancashire man has the national love of horse flesh, but it is questionable if he is such an ardent betting man as he is made out to be, or anywhere near as bad in this respect, say, as his Yorkshire neighbour. At least, one has never seen such wild displays in the streets as are to be witnessed in such places as Leeds and Bradford when the result of a big race is announced, and one doubts, also, whether there is as much street betting as is to be found in the Midlands and the South. Betting, where it does occur, seems to be much more rife in the workshop than in the mill, one of the reasons probably being that the rules about leaving factories during working hours are more strict and do not offer so much encouragement to the betting tout.

The extent to which betting is indulged in anywhere is difficult to estimate. Those who judge by published figures are apt to be led astray, for, as in cases of drunkenness, betting prosecutions depend to a great extent on the vigilance of the police, and even then only the indiscreet and unwary provide the "awful examples." There are people, as one knows, like Mark Twain's Jim Smiley, who will bet in season and out of season, on anything and everywhere, but the vice cannot be pinned down to one locality more than another. One or two towns could be indicated where it is more openly practised than in others, but those writers who like to make moral capital out of what they have seen in odd places in Lancashire can have but

little knowledge how extensively the vice is indulged in elsewhere.

The truth is, the Lancashire man is fond of sport for its own sake, and this he shows in a thousand ways where betting seldom or never enters into the game. Watch how vigorously he will denounce anything crooked in athletics, and how bitterly he will resent unfairness in an umpire or referee. He likes his own side to win, but he finds no pleasure in a victory by methods that will not bear scrutiny and reflection.

Nothing, perhaps, better gives an idea of the Lancashire man's genuine love of sport than the keen relish with which he enjoys a hunting day. From "time out of mind," as the old folks say, he has shown this special liking. It was quite a common thing for the handloom weavers of a hundred years ago to work the night through in order to enjoy a holiday to follow the hounds, and the same love of the chase is seen to-day, even among the humblest. And, curiously enough, the elderly men seem more devoted to the pastime than the youngsters. In one district the writer knows well no hunt would be considered complete without a certain group of septuagenarians—superannuated factory folk, mostly, who have managed to save enough money to "live retired"—who, after seeing the "meet," make their way on foot to one point of vantage after another on the countryside, and generally manage to see everything worth seeing. They know the country so well that they are never far away when the kill takes

place, and the master of the hunt is never above taking their suggestions. Most of the men are as hale and hearty as the hares they chase, and no sort of weather seems to prevent their attendance. One old man, a little while ago, was not deterred even by a sharp attack of rheumatism, but put in an appearance as usual with the help of a walking-stick in either hand!

It may, by the way, be said of hunting in many parts of Lancashire nowadays, that it is, in its mounted form, more or less the pastime of factory masters, and there is little of the old-time display attached to the sport as formerly carried on by the squire and the landed proprietor. As a spectacle it has decidedly lost in attractiveness. Instead of the scarlet and other bravery which used to give such a festive appearance to the hunters, and which was so effective as the riders streamed over hill and dale, there is now a tendency to dress in more sombre garments, and to wear the attire one generally associates with a canter in the park. The explanation, no doubt, lies in the fact that busy men of affairs do not give up the whole of any day to the sport, and so adopt a dress which allows them to do three or four hours' work at the mill before mounting their horses and starting for the "meet."

Indeed, one often wishes that the participants in many outdoor games had a little more of that sense of colour which is displayed to such effect in the South-country. The absence of it, however, may be due less to an artistic defect than to that deplorable utilitarianism which finds no virtue in

anything that is not "serviceable," and which would sacrifice every feature of the landscape to build cheaply or add a few extra yards of tillage to field or meadow land.

No chapter devoted to the recreative side of the county life would be complete without mention of the great annual holiday of the factory folk, called in some places the "Wakes," and in a few towns the "Rushbearing." At this time—about a week in the month of August or September—hundreds of thousands released from spindle and loom eagerly rush to the seaside, and there spend every day and every hour of the day in the merriest, maddest revel.

Leaving out of the question whether the holiday is or is not wisely spent—and it is a mistake to imagine that all spend their savings in the reckless, improvident fashion set down by the superior person who sometimes writes to the newspapers—there is no doubt that these high-spirited and strenuous people enjoy a carnival of pleasure which is the envy of workers in other parts of the country. For one thing no other industrial community is catered for in such a royal fashion as are these spinners and weavers of the North. It is their numbers rather than their individual purses that entertainment managers in Lancashire watering-places keep in view, and these numbers make it possible for the greatest concert, theatre, and music-hall artistes in the country to be seen and heard at the smallest possible expense. At Blackpool, for instance, where something like a cool million of

money has been spent in providing gorgeous palaces of pleasure, the nimble sixpence will buy ten times more entertainment than it will at Brighton or Margate or any other place frequented by Londoners of the working class.

All places of amusement reap a rich harvest at this season, but more particularly do those places flourish which adequately gauge the Lancashire people's love for "fiddlin' and doancin'." They have, indeed, a passion for dancing. There is no county where the lads and lasses dance so much and dance so well, and when on a holiday they are ready to dance morning, noon, and night. At every place where there is a little space and a band one can find them dancing—on the piers in the morning, at one or other of the recreation grounds in the afternoon, and at splendidly-appointed public assembly rooms in the evening.

The places where these energetic holiday makers can "have a jig," as they would term it, have of recent years become more and more palatial, and some of them are supplied with orchestras which would do no discredit to a State ball. For sixpence the clumsiest lad who ever carried a "baggin'-can" is allowed to scrawl his hobnails across a floor of beautifully polished oak, and gyrate to the strains of an incomparable Waldteufel waltz. And while the M.C. will be in immaculate evening dress, and carry a wand in his white-gloved hand, some of the male dancers are probably wearing cycling clothes and caps, and carrying under their arms parcels and umbrellas. And to complete the picture, the

typical "Owdham Roughyed" will be found in the intervals between his "jigging" drinking glasses of beer, calling loudly for "Margit Ann," and playfully shouting to a pal that he will "come o'er and give him a punce i't nose!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ELECTION HUMOUR.

Of recent years Midlanders have nursed the fond delusion that the area in which Birmingham is the ruling influence is the centre of English political life, but in the words of Sir Edward Elgar, quoted in a preceding chapter, there is no doubt that the locality upon which St. Stephen's has its eye at times of electoral strife is "somewhere further North."

The reason is not far to seek. First and foremost, the constituencies of a county like Lancashire are so numerous that any party that can capture them has gone a long way towards success, and, further, the exceptionally keen interest the people take in Parliamentary matters leads to the county being regarded as an almost unfailing political barometer. Birmingham plumps unchangingly for one particular interest, but Lancashire exercises an unfettered opinion on all questions, and, despite the gibes of the envious, what the county says on the first few days of the polls is pretty sure to be the ultimate verdict of the country.

Where Parliamentary constituencies exist where it is no uncommon thing to find recorded no less than ninety-five per cent. of the total votes, and where a municipal candidate will poll forty-seven or forty-eight per cent. of the ward electorate and still find himself beaten, the keenness of the community is manifest. Naturally, such close voting

tells of equally strenuous preparation for the contests. An election meeting in Lancashire is looked forward to by the ordinary working man with delight in the case of his own side, and unholy joy in that of his opponents. And when some big principle is at stake, he will send a Premier or a Cabinet Minister packing with as little compunction as he would turn out the most insignificant "carpet bagger."

That marked characteristic of the Lancashire man, independence, is seen in its strongest light at election times. There is nothing he exercises with greater freedom of conscience than the franchise, and there is no other county where spiritual pastors and masters have so little influence upon the vote. In the public-house or at his club, in the workshop or at the factory gates, no subject is so popular as that which is concerned with party politics, and nowhere are political speeches more closely followed or more keenly criticised.

They take up an attitude altogether foreign to the Southern mind. Their outlook, for instance, is wider. As a writer in the "Times" once pointed out:—"The political speaker in most Northern villages finds that considerations and arguments of a general character are readily followed, and indeed are looked for. Altogether the Northern type of character, even before it is brought under distinctly urban influences, is a robuster type than is common South of the Trent. The sterner climate has braced it. The element of ruggedness, often of bleakness, sometimes of grandeur, in the scenery,

and the breadth of the sweeps of hill or moorland so often visible have perhaps helped to preserve the Northern peasantry from that limitation of interests which is often found where the landscape is richer and more thickly clothed and the horizon is nearer."

At the time of the Home Rule split, the present writer witnessed a scene in a Lancashire county constituency which it would be difficult if not impossible to parallel in the South. A meeting had been called at an isolated village among the hills on the Lancashire and Yorkshire border, to be addressed by the Unionist candidate and presided over by the local factory master, at whose mills all those in the place were employed. While the villagers had remained loyal to Gladstone, the factory master had followed the lead of Bright and Chamberlain, a circumstance which seemed to be very hotly resented. Indeed, the factory master had no sooner risen from the chair than he was loudly hooted, twitted unmercifully about being a "turncoat," and eventually howled down by an audience which packed the village schoolroom to the point of suffocation. The fact that the factory master knew each individual personally, and could, were he so disposed, make the ringleaders feel the weight of his displeasure, made not the slightest difference. Outside the mill, the man who employed them was purely and simply a political enemy, and they no more dreamt of hiding their feelings in his presence than he did of taking vindictive action later on. He had his opinion, and

he recognised that they, also, had a perfect right to their own. He smilingly took the repeated rebuffs, and finally both he and the candidate had to swallow their discomfiture and leave the meeting in the hands of the villagers, who yelled with delight as the two gentlemen drove away.

With many electioneering experiences in the Midlands and the South to look back upon, the writer can safely say that he never saw anything to equal that scene. Giles generally adopts a much more discreet attitude. He may hold strong private opinions, and intend to vindicate those opinions at the polls, but when the farmer or landowner who employs him has something to say on political matters he generally listens with some show of deference, at all events.

Another incident which took place during the same political crisis shows how little the Lancashire man really cares for anything but the principle at stake when elections are being fought. Mr. John Albert Bright, son of the great Tribune, who had, with his father, become a Liberal Unionist, was invited to address a meeting at Littleborough, a place at that time rather notoriously Gladstonian, and not very far removed from where the Brights were born and lived. When he ascended the platform, he found himself face to face with a particularly hostile assembly of working men, who soon showed that they cared little for either family names or reputations. After Mr. Bright had again and again essayed to speak and found it impossible, the chairman appealed to the meeting for order,

remarking, somewhat indiscreetly, that the audience might at least give to Mr. Bright a patient hearing, if it were only out of respect for the name he bore. Instantly from the back of the hall came the retort, "Whaw, tha doesn't think politics runs i't blood, like wood legs, dosti!"

The mention of Mr. John Albert Bright recalls the fact that that gentleman once startled his constituents in Birmingham with a simile drawn from his Lancashire experience. Twitting the Government of that day with having brought in a Bill which had proved unusually troublesome, he remarked that he had no doubt the Cabinet were in much the same position as a man who some time previously had been brought before himself and other justices in Rochdale on a charge of stealing ducks. The evidence against the prisoner was very clear and circumstantial, but, following the usual formula, he was asked what he had to say before being dealt with. "I've naught to say," said the man, sullenly, "nobbut I wish I'd never seen the ——— ducks!" The sanguinary remark that Mr. Bright repeated was much commented upon in the jewellery city, especially coming from the lips of such a well-known Quaker.

Dr. Moorhouse, when Bishop of Manchester, had an experience of Lancashire audiences which he would not soon forget. On one occasion he greatly incensed the Low Church party in Blackburn by refusing to ordain a certain lay preacher, and when he next appeared in the town he had a reception which would have staggered a father of the Church

of an earlier day. But Bishop Moorhouse was not the man to be daunted by a hostile mob, and lifting his great voice he commanded and finally obtained a hearing, his defence, which was thoroughly satisfactory, touching a point of character of which the angry Churchmen had no knowledge.

Sometimes audiences emphasise their opinions with more tangible things than words. In the autobiography of Dr. Guinness Rogers, a good story is told of that Liverpool worthy, Mr. W. S. Caine. This was in the later days of Dr. Rogers, when he and Dr. Dale were stumping the country in favour of Disestablishment. Mr. Caine took the chair at Liverpool, and it was rather a lively meeting. Suddenly in the midst of the proceedings Mr. Caine left his seat and passed to the other side of the platform to remove his coat and replace it by his overcoat. Dr. Rogers was rather surprised at this, but the explanation proved to be that Mr. Caine had been struck by a rotten egg, and so he had coolly changed his coat in full view of the audience.

The Lancashire man is an accomplished heckler, and a book could be made of his effective interruptions and witty retorts. Manchester has provided many good examples. Some time ago, at one of Mr. Balfour's meetings in East Manchester, a sly remark from a member of the audience quite upset the gravity of the proceedings, and came near to spoiling the meeting altogether. As it was evident from the start that there was a very rowdy element present, Alderman Marks, who presided, thought it

would be well to endeavour to propitiate the turbulent forces by an appeal to their better instincts, and began his opening speech by praising the electors of East Manchester for their good behaviour in times past, and saying, in effect, what a fine lot of fellows they were. Again and again he alluded to their love of justice and fair play, but the whole buttering process was rendered ineffective by some wag shouting "Stop yer ticklin', Jock!" The audience roared with laughter, particularly as the Alderman's name was "John," and the repetition of the well-known Harry Lauder phrase at intervals during the evening prevented those present from settling down to any serious consideration of political matters.

In a special Jubilee supplement of the "Manchester Courier," issued some time ago, Mr. E. Goodwin, one of the oldest and most popular members of its staff, told a number of other good election stories relating to Manchester and district. He told, for instance, of Sir William Agnew as a Parliamentary candidate asking his audience to "Look on this picture and on that," and being told by one man present to "keep out of the shop"; and again of the Salford candidate, who, quoting Scripture as against his wicked opponents the Tories, said, "The leopard cannot change his spots," but was met with the retort, "When it is tired of one spot it can go to another!"

Mr. Balfour, at one of his earliest meetings as candidate for East Manchester, was, Mr. Goodwin remarks, very much tickled by the picturesque

language of his chairman, the late Mr. Chesters-Thompson. On one occasion this gentleman described the ex-Premier as a man who, having found everything left at sixes and sevens by his predecessors in office, "took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, went at it like a tallow chandler, and rendered everything down smooth." Mr. Goodwin also tells of a former Lancashire Member of Parliament who made an amusing slip while addressing the members of one of the political clubs in his constituency. He recalled the speeches he had made at St. Stephen's, the Bills he had backed and supported, and the votes he had given, his reminiscences being uttered with that volubility which is answerable for much that had better be left unsaid or expressed differently. The hon. member in the end volunteered his opinion that if his hearers would reflect for a moment, they would say that "he had not been such a ——— fool, after all!" The chairman, we are told, was not happy until he had been assured that this emphatic utterance should not appear in the next day's reports.

It was another Manchester pressman who told the writer of having been present at a Lancashire political meeting where an enthusiastic working man speaker made a funny mistake in endeavouring to embellish his oratorical effort. The room in which the speech was made had been decorated for the occasion, and at the back of the platform, in the midst of a stack of flags, was a painted shield bearing the Royal Arms. During one of his loyal outbursts, he turned for dramatic effect and pointed

to the shield. "What does it say there, ladies and gentlemen! 'Dew het mon droyt.' And you all know what that means—'Evil be to him what evil thinks!' And them, ladies and gentlemen, are my sentiments."

Speaking at a concert given by the Lancastrians in London some time ago, Sir William H. Bailey, of Salford, told several good political anecdotes. One Parliamentary candidate who had harped on the proverb that "Speech is silvern, and silence is golden," was interrupted by a Lancashire man who called out, "Thee keep thy mouth shut, an' tha'll grow rich."

Sir William also mentioned a Bolton factory master, a candidate for Parliamentary honours, who was inordinately fond of diamonds.. One night when addressing a meeting, his supporters called for three cheers for their prospective member, but some of his opponents being present and noting that he had "about seventy-five pounds' worth of ironmongery on his hands," utterly discomfited the candidate by afterwards calling for "three cheers for his jewellery!"

One of the best retorts on record was that made to a Member of Parliament who was talking of the unrecognised drudgery that a full session entailed, and telling his constituents how he had been sitting up night after night for his country's good. At this point came an interruption. "We'll make thi sit up, devil, afore win done wi' thi!"

One critic of the Government, in the course of a speech at a crowded meeting in Heywood, asked,

"What have members been doing in London during the past three weeks?" "There's no tellin'," came the sly response, in a woman's voice, at which the audience roared.

Another speaker, on his defence, said, "Never mind, gentlemen, there's a good time coming." "I've yheard that ever sin' I wur a lad," shouted someone in the audience. "Tha couldn't give us a date, could ti?"

Speakers on politics in Lancashire have to be very smart and ready if they hold their own. All kinds of means are adopted to make them look ridiculous.

"Arti in favour o' childer gooin' to't skoo' till they're sixteen?" asked a working man interested in the half-time question.

"Yes," replied the candidate.

"Well, I hammot. I'm noane gooin' to have my lad comin' whoam fro't skoo an' axin' me for a penny for a shave!"

After badgering a candidate in every possible way at a meeting held during the last General Election campaign in Bacup, a little Lancashire town among the hills not far from the Yorkshire border, a native got up and asked the would-be member whether, if returned, he would be in favour of making Bacup into a seaport! It was, of course, a ludicrous question, incapable of a sensible answer, but put in order to raise a laugh, and if possible depreciate the candidate in the eyes of the meeting.

The whole of the Rossendale Valley, at the extreme end of which Bacup is situated, is, by the

way, a keen political arena. Judging by the number of such buildings to be seen along the roadside, the population must practically live in Liberal and Conservative clubs. Every local event is given some political or national significance. Recently a section of the tramway system in the Valley was reorganised, but before the old, lumbering steam cars were "scrapped" a local photographer embraced the opportunity of getting them together and securing a pictorial memento. The photograph was utilised for a picture postcard, and christened, to suit the subject of the moment, "The Last of the Baltic Fleet!"

The various meetings held in Lancashire by the militant suffragettes have produced a fund of humour, and it must be admitted that the ladies, true to their reputation for ready speech, have seldom come off second best.

One lady speaker in a South-east Lancashire town, while dilating on the advantages which she considered men folk enjoyed, was interrupted by one of the tyrannical sex, who asked ironically "Don't you wish you were a man?" "Yes," replied the speaker, "Don't you?"

Another man was silenced in the same way. "A woman's place is at home with her children," he shouted. "Yes, and the place of children is at home with their mother," was the pointed reply. It is, of course, an elementary form of retort, but it seldom fails to serve its immediate purpose of turning the laugh against the interrupter.

For some time after the introduction of the

ballot, the political squib was a prominent feature in elections, but one seldom sees it nowadays. One made an appearance in a Heywood election some years ago in the form of a sheet of racing notes, with "latest betting." Two of these notes will suffice as specimens:—

"FLUCTUATOR, an uncouth, ungainsome horse, by PREJUDICE, out of VICIOUS MIXTURE. Fluctuator was defeated by West Warder in the late race for the County Council Cup. He is a vicious, ungovernable horse, shying and kicking at churches, high wages, and beer barrels, empty or full, which makes him a danger to his backers, and a terror to his rider. He is also broken-winded. To prevent possible danger to him, his friends are making arrangements with the postal authorities to stop the telegraph during the race, for fear he may come a cropper by dashing in among the telegrams. His owners will bet their fullest book of scandal to a mouse trap that he will win the South Ward Stakes."

"BOUNCING BILLY, by NOTHING LEFT, out of SHARP PRACTICE, and backed by FLEXIBILITY and YAWPING JACK. Bouncing Billy is the property of the Local Yearning Company, who make the School for Scandal their place of business. Bouncing Billy is said to be in prime condition, having been Chief Muncher for many years in the Corporation stables and pastures, out of which he has just been driven, and into which he is already whinnying to get back. He has been of great cost to the town and to private friends. The betting is at long odds in his favour. All his good works, and his private winnings, are offered to a fiddlestick that he will again win the North Ward prize."

When Socialism first became a factor in politics, all kinds of means were adopted to discredit it. One of the stories told to belittle the new creed had a great success wherever Radicals or Tories were gathered together. It was to the effect that a

labourer in Bury was once asked to carry a banner in a Socialist procession, and the pay being satisfactory he consented. On the way, he got into conversation with a "comrade" who walked beside him, and asked for information about the new crusade. "Well," the Socialist is supposed to have replied, "we contend that it is unjust that one man should have more money than another, and are aiming at having it all shared out alike." "Aah," said the labourer, "I see. An' a very good idea, too." The two were silent for a little while, and then the labourer, who had been turning over the matter in his mind, suddenly said, "An' how much dun yo' reckon it 'ud be apiece, like?" "Well, somebody did say that it would be about forty-seven pounds, sixteen and elevenpence ha'penny." "Forty-seven pound!" exclaimed the labourer; "Here, thee tak' howd o' this banner, I've getten eighty pound i't co-op."

This story is about as extravagant as that old one of the Lancashire collier and Lord Derby, said to have been told by Socialists to confound their enemies. Legend has it that the earl once came upon a collier poaching, and the following dialogue took place:—

"Here, my man, get off this land."

"What for?" asked the collier.

"Well, if you want to know, because it is my land."

"Oh! an' wheer did ta' get it fro'?"

"I inherited it from my father."

"An' how did he get it?"

"From my grandfather, and he from his fathers before him."

"I see. But heaw did thi gron'feythers fust get howd on it?"

"Well, if you must know, they fought for it."

"Oh, did they! Well, if tha likes, I'll feight *thee* for it!"

A chapter on electioneering could be extended indefinitely, but it will perhaps suffice to recall one or two canvassing stories. One is told of Crossland, the famous Lancashire bowler, who, during an election in Blackburn, where he lived, locked his chamber door and went to bed to avoid the canvassers. Mr. A. N. Hornby, however, was out canvassing for his brother, Sir Harry Hornby, and meant to take no refusal from his old cricket colleague. When "A. N." arrived at the house, someone went upstairs and shouted to Crossland that a "gentleman cricketer" had called, and that the gentleman cricketer was not going until he took "Jack" with him to the polling booth. Crossland replied through the keyhole that he wouldn't vote for anybody, not even Father Peter. "But you're coming to vote for my brother," shouted Mr. Hornby from the bottom of the stairs, "and see that you are on the field in two minutes from now." The voice of his old captain was quite enough. "Jack" was down like a shot, and was marched in triumph to the polling booth.

It is told of a collier that he was one day called upon by the canvassers of both political parties, and gave to each the same answer. "Dosti know what

tha's done?" asked his wife when the second man had left. "Tha's gone an' promised to vote for both lots." "Aah, I know," said the husband with unconcern, "an' did ti notice how pleyst fust mon wur, an' then how pleyst t'other chap seemed, too? Well, tha sees, I pleyst um both, an' when t' time comes I'se pleyse misel', an' then we's o' be pleyst together!"

During a contested election in Rochdale many years ago, a funny effect was obtained through the accidental overlapping of two posters on an advertisement hoarding.

Vote for Potter,

The Genuine Product of Prime Ox-Beef,

ran the words, and as Mr. T. B. Potter was a man of great size and bulk, the odd juxtaposition of the two lines was much enjoyed.

CHAPTER IX.

LANCASHIRE LOVE-MAKING.

THERE is one characteristic that a Lancashire man —and "man" in this particular instance does not necessarily embrace "woman"—has, perhaps, in a more marked degree than any other of his countrymen, and that is secretiveness in his affairs of love. He may make a great noise at a political meeting, may show his jubilation in a very marked way when things are going well for his side in a football match, but when he seeks a wife he is "sly—devilish sly."

Indeed, he has a great dislike at any time to an exhibition of sentiment, although he feels as deeply as most people. Among the working classes it is quite the exception to see a man kiss his wife, although there may be a multitude of practical evidences that the one is absolutely devoted to the other. And among the older generation one will scarcely ever hear a husband refer to his "wife," preferring to speak of his absent partner in a roundabout, quizzical fashion. He will, in all likelihood, call her "Th' owd Stocking Mender," "My Owd Rib," "Yon woman at eaur house," or some such name. If he were heard to address his wife as "my dear," he would probably be punished for the rest of his days with a "by-name," and his children would be the children of "Tommy, my dear."

And if it be so after marriage, one can understand the position of things beforehand, when his sense of

humour and horror of ridicule both prompt him to caution, and lead him to seek a dignified way of escape in the event of an embarrassing refusal. He often, therefore, makes his attack, or proposal, in an oblique fashion.

"They say there's gooin' to be a wedding in these parts next month, Martha," one sly character is reported to have said to the young woman he eventually married.

"Nay, tha doesn't say!" remarked the pretty innocent. "I've yheard naught about it. Who are they?"

"One on um's coed Bill Turner (mentioning his own name)."

"Oh! an' who is t' lass?"

"Well, hoo's getten t' same name as thee," replied Bill. "Wilti come an' see it?"

"Aah, I'll come," replied the girl, demurely. "It 'ud be a pity to disappeynt 'um, wouldn't it!"

One of the stories told is of a bashful swain who, finding that the girl of his heart took no notice of his visits, summoned up his courage and said:

"Jane, I wur here o' Monday neet."

"Well, an' what bi that?"

"An' I wur here o' Tuesday neet, too."

"Aah, so tha wur."

"An' I wur here o' Wednesday neet an' o' Thursday neet."

"Well?"

"An' I'm here again to-neet."

"What about that? Connot ti come when tha likes?"

"What about it, dosti say? Whaw, lass, hasn't ti begun to smell a rat!"

This timid lover, however, was hardly so unsatisfactory as another lad one has heard about.

"Why doesn't ti say summat, John?" said his sweetheart, while out walking.

"Becose I've getten naught to say," he replied.

"But why doesn't ti tell me tha loves me?" came the query, after a long pause.

"Becose I've towd thi that afore."

"Well, John," she said, as he still walked on in his undemonstrative fashion, "why doesn't ti gi'e me a kiss?"

"I'm gooin' to do in a bit!" replied John, still refusing to be hurried.

One of the oddest proposals of which one has ever heard, was that of a Rochdale man named Mills, mentioned in Robertson's Guide to Rochdale, who, at the burial of his first wife saw his wife's sister standing on the other side of the open grave. She was evidently much distressed. "What's to do wi' thee, lass?" Mills called to her. As she wiped her eyes she said, "There's naught but trouble on this side o't grave." "Well," said Mills, "come o'er to this side, then!"

Almost as odd, and certainly more lugubrious, was the case of a Lancashire lad who one night found himself walking with a young woman along a pathway leading through the parish churchyard. For several weeks he had waited for a good opportunity to "pop the question," so, stopping in his walk, he said, "Margit Ann, I want to ax thi

summat?" "Well, what is it?" said the girl. "O eaur folk are buried theer," he said, pointing to one of the graves, "Would ta like to lie theer, too?" "Aah, I would, Bill," replied the girl, solemnly, and he kissed her and sealed the bargain.

Of course, one occasionally comes across a striking exception to the rule. There was nothing "shame-faced" or secretive about the girl who, being asked to have a ride on a donkey at Blackpool, said, "I'll have a ride if that young chap (pointing to a stranger) will pay for it." "O reet," said the young fellow. "An' I'll tell thi what," he added, "I'll have a ride mysel', an' as sure as I'm here if thy donkey licks mine I'll wed thi." The donkeys started, and the one the girl was riding won easily, the young fellow pretending that his one would not go beyond a walking pace. He married her, saying that the donkeys understood.

There are many tales, also, of the philosophical sort. The writer knew the relatives of one man who, unable any longer to live with his wife, emigrated to America, and there contracted a bigamous marriage. Although he was aware that the news of his second wedding had reached his native place, he had the audacity to pay a return visit to see his relatives and friends. When his first wife heard of his presence in the neighbourhood she was quite indifferent. "It sarved me reet," she said, "for thratin' him as I did afore he went away!"

There is a story well known in the county of an old woman of seventy who married a man some years older than herself. A day or two afterwards

she met the rector of the parish, who asked how it was she had married again, and if she had given up her washing. "Eh, dear o' me, nowe!" she replied, "I've noane gi'en up mi weshin'. I fun' I couldn't wheel t' things out mysel', an' I'd to choose between weddin' him or buyin' a donkey!"

One has heard stories of the leisurely kind—the kind of man who will be engaged for twenty years and then be highly indignant should it be hinted that it is high time he were married—but there was something of the Grand Turk about the way another man, one whom the writer knew, secured his wife. One Sunday morning he called on a young woman of his acquaintance and asked her to go for a walk. She consented, and the two started off for a stroll across the fields. When they had gone some distance, the man turned to the woman and said:

"What sez ti about comin' an' bein' wed this mornin'?"

"Nay, Bill, tha'rt jokin'!"

"Nay, I hammot; I myen it. I've getten everything ready at th' Owd Church, an' our Bob, an' a young woman he con co' for on't road, 'll ston' for us."

"Eh! I hardly know what to say," replied the perplexed girl, "it's so sudden. I should want moore time to think things o'er; an' whichever road it wur, I couldn't goo this mornin'. There's lots o' things ——"

"Dosti think tha could get to like me?"

"Well, maybe I could," she admitted.

"Then come on now, an' let's make a short job on't."

"I couldn't goo onywheer like this," said the girl, looking down at her frock. "I mun goo whoam to change mi dress."

"There's no time," said Bill. "It's oather now or never."

So the girl, seeing the man's humour, made no more ado than took his arm and went off to get married.

That being the day of the picturesque wedding, no doubt the young woman felt that she was being robbed of her due in many ways. Her contemporaries, she knew, would go to church decked in all their finery, attended by eight or ten couples and a fiddler. Other brides and bridegrooms, too, would have the advantage of a day's dancing and feasting.

Nowadays, it would not have mattered so much, for the marriage ceremony seems to become more and more a thing to be kept secret and hurried through. Where they at one time would have gone on foot half a dozen miles to some venerable parish church, receiving on the way the good wishes and congratulations of their friends and neighbours, they now, if possible, steal off to church, chapel, or registry office unknown to anybody, and have the ceremony disposed of in the shortest possible time. One morning recently, during an Oldham Wakes week, it was reported that the presiding genius at one of the registry offices in that town made a score

of couples man and wife at the rate of four and a half minutes per couple.

Sometimes, of course, the leisurely wedding had its drawbacks, as in the case of the couple who once started away across the fields to Rochdale Old Church. In the four miles they had to travel, it was said they had been more together than in all their courting days, and before they had got half-way they had run short of talk. After they had walked for about a mile or so without a word, the man turned sharply to the woman and said:

"Con ti make a podditoe pie?"

"Aah," said the girl.

"What dosti put in?"

"Whaw, flesh an' podditoes," she replied, "what makes thi ax sich questions?"

"Oh, dosti? Hum—m! An' con ti make porritch?"

"Onybody con make porritch, connot they?"

"Well, but what does ta make um on?" he asked.

"Meayle; what else should I make um on, tha gawmless foo'!"

"Connot ti make um beawt?"

"Nowe," was the response.

"Then we'd better turn back," said the man, "for tha'll noane do for me."

And back the two went, the man blaming himself for not having put a few such questions earlier. He explained afterwards that a woman who had never heard of flour porridge was of no use to him; she would run away with all the money a man could possibly get hold of. They could never hope to live

up to potato pies such as she made and "whol'-meayle porritch."

Among the "better" class there is, of course, the same worldly shrewdness in mating as elsewhere, but, taken generally, sentiment rules to a much greater degree than might be supposed among a people who have the reputation of being extremely practical and hard-headed. They are a good deal like the Scotch, in that they have often a strong vein of romance in their composition, but in saying this one does not overlook the fact that in some of the denser factory areas many of the working people enter into the holy state with a thoughtlessness and a lightheartedness which are almost criminal.

A writer in one of the Manchester papers, speaking of the wholesale registry office marriages which take place in Oldham at Wakes time, recently said: "What struck me most about this five-minute marriage was the entire absence of any emotion or display of feeling by the contracting parties. An air of irresponsibility prevailed throughout. The young couples went to get married with much the same feeling as they went to get tickets to Blackpool or Douglas. Some of the couples were little more than children. They went to the registry unaccompanied by parents or relatives, and they tied themselves to each other for life with a cheerful recklessness that showed that they were either extremely precocious or powerfully ignorant. I learned that not twenty per cent. of these newly-married couples have homes of their own. Apart from the question of ways and means, houses are difficult to get in

Oldham, and the young husband and wife will be obliged to live with the parents of one or the other. But as neither intends giving up his or her work the matter of accommodation is not pressing. On their return to work the husband will go to the spindles and the wife to her loom, and between them they will make a decent income."

It must, however, be said in extenuation of some of these marriages that the woman in industrial Lancashire is in a totally different position to her sister in the more southerly, agricultural parts of the country. Spinsters are in such decided majority in the mill districts that offers of marriage are not to be lightly thrown aside, and in those cases where it means the giving up of factory work altogether, the temptation is so great as to be practically irresistible.

Many stories are told to show how eagerly the mill girl looks forward to marriage and emancipation.

One old weaver in trying to persuade his daughter not to marry, quoted Scripture to assist him. "Eh, lass!" he said, "does ti know what St. Paul says?"

"Well, what does he say?"

"Well, he says them as marry do weel, but them as dunnot marry at o' do better."

"Well, feyther," the lass replied, "I'm beawn to do weel, an' them con do better 'at likes."

If one is to believe the following, they must, indeed, become pessimistic at a very early age. A group of girls were one day overheard discussing matrimony in the Blackburn Market Hall, and

taking a gloomy view of their prospects. One, aged twenty-two, said she already considered herself "on the shelf." "Tha'rt better off than I am," rejoined another, who was said to have reached the venerable age of twenty-one, "for I'm never even takken off to be dusted."

When a man or woman is not considered too old for matrimony, by the way, the country folk are in the habit of saying that he, or she, "will clog again," and should a person be mentioned whose plainness would seem to make his or her chances of marriage highly problematical, there comes the reassuring remark that "There never wur a fou' face but there wur a fou' fancy to match it." In other words, of course, "every Jack has his Jill."

An old lady of the writer's acquaintance once overheard the following dialogue in a street in Rochdale between a middle-aged man, who had the prosperous look of a factory overlooker, and another about the same in age and appearance who was walking towards him on the opposite side of the street in company with a woman.

"Mornin', Tum."

"Mornin', Bill."

"Is that thy wife?"

"Aah."

"Well, hoo's a gradely fou' woman."

"Does ti raally think so?"

"Aah, I do."

"Well, I guess I'se ha' to do t' best I con wi' her now," replied the husband, with comic resignation. "Happen hoo'l go no fou'er wi' keepin'."

"Nowe; happen hoo winnot," said the critic. "Good mornin'."

"Good mornin'."

The man who made the comment was evidently a privileged wag, or noted, as they say in Lancashire, for his "plaguey, awvish ways," for neither man nor woman appeared to resent in the least what had been said. Or perhaps the absence of sting lay in the fact that the woman, instead of being "fou'," was a distinctly comely dame, and the apparent criticism might be a compliment delivered negatively.

The word "fou'," it should be noted, must by no means be always taken to have the English equivalent of "foul." Lancashire people speak of a man having uttered a "fou' word" when he has been guilty of swearing, but more often than not it stands for ugliness of any kind.

The little dialogue just mentioned reminds one of another occasion when a friend heard a young fellow introduce his sweetheart to a pal on the opposite side of the street. Then, the word "it," as applied to the young woman, made the conversation appear very quaint. "Hasti never seen it before?" "Does ti think it'll do?" and so forth, the young fellow asked, and "it" all the time stood by, smiling with a charming unconcern.

Babies and young women are generally alluded to as "it"; older women, spoken of singly, are dignified by the word "hoo," which is the equivalent of "she." A story is told to illustrate the use that is made of the word "it." Three factory

lasses were going down the street behind a young lady who appeared in danger of losing her long white fur. "Sithi, Mary Ellen," said one, "it's beawn to leyse it fur. Goo an' tell it." "Nay, I'm noane gooin' to tell it," said Mary Ellen. "Thee goo an' tell it, Jane, tha con talk best." "Nay, by gum, I'm not beawn to say ought to it," said Jane. "It's happen a new fashion for it to wear it down it back!"

CHAPTER X.

WIT AND REPARTEE.

"THERE is not a people on the face of the earth possessed of the same humour, expressed in brief sentences—humour which shakes a man with laughter as a consequence of saying half a dozen words," remarked Mr. George Milner, speaking of Lancashire men at the unveiling of the statue to Ben Brierley, in Manchester, some time ago, and those who know the county best will agree with him.

Certainly one has never met with anything like the same quality of wit and repartee in any other part of England. The Lancastrian is at his best in humorous comment and criticism, and no one can put a point more succinctly. This side of his character, and his natural outspokenness, invests every public meeting with piquancy, and makes doubly interesting any company where men's affairs are being discussed.

Commenting on this particular trait, the librarian in one of the chief Government departments in Whitehall once told the writer of having been present at a meeting in Lancashire where a London gentleman had been appointed receiver or trustee in the affairs of a certain company. The gentleman seemed uncommonly suspicious of everybody, and made a great point of the guarantees he would require; indeed, his insistence upon safeguards became so monotonous that at last one man, greatly

to the amusement of those present, called from the back of the room, "An' who's gooin' to guarantee thee!"

Mr. Henry Brierley, the Registrar of Wigan County Court, when opening a bazaar in Rochdale on one occasion, told a story of a Wigan boy whose father had died. Meeting the lad shortly afterwards, the Vicar asked what were his father's last words. "Feyther didn't have no last words," replied the boy, "Mother wur wi' him to th' end!"

A Lancashire man was one day talking of the style in which his own townspeople were keeping up the municipal dignity. "Why, nobbut just lately, win bought our Mayor a new collar an' chain," he said, with pride. "Han yo'?" exclaimed a man who lived in a newly-incorporated town some distance away, "Why, we letten yon beggar of ours run loase."

One of two well-known revivalists who came from America to conduct a crusade in this country a few years ago, was much annoyed while in Liverpool to see a man rise from his seat in the meeting and make for the door. The revivalist was in the middle of a "fire and brimstone" oration, and surprised everyone by remarking, "My mother's gone to hell. She was not saved. That man there, who is just leaving the room, is going to hell too." The man stopped and turned sharply towards the speaker on the platform. "Oh, am I?" he retorted, "Well, has ti ony word tha wants me to tak' to thi mother?"

A former Rochdale alderman was one morning

standing on the station platform when a newspaper lad came along. "Here, my boy, have you got a copy of 'Great Thoughts'?" he asked. "There are no 'Great Thoughts' in Rochdale this morning, sir," replied the lad with a grin.

A young fellow of the masher type was one night made to look very ridiculous in a Lancashire theatre by a member of a community which particularly dislikes ostentation. After the first act he rose in his place and turned to first one part of the "house" and then to another, presumably to look for a friend, but in reality to display his fine clothes. After greatly trying the patience of the audience, someone called, loud enough for everyone in the theatre to hear, "Tha con sit deawn now, win o' seen thi!"

The following incident is vouched for by a friend of the writer. In a certain East Lancashire town an old woman was seen walking down the street one wet day with the skirt of her dress turned over her head to protect her bonnet. A mischievous youngster coming behind her shouted, "Eh! woman, yo're showin' yo're legs!" "Never mind mi legs," replied the old dame, as she "trigged along" towards home. "Mi legs are seventy year owd, but mi bonnet's a new un!"

In the days before new-fangled education authorities had reduced the schoolmaster to a nonentity, and before parents had forgotten the Scriptural injunction that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, a certain dominie, well known in a district about a dozen miles from Manchester, not

only taught his scholars well but whipped them well when circumstances required. Many a lad, smarting under the indignity of a good strapping or caning, vowed that he would have his revenge when he grew to manhood, but instead of carrying out his threat, lived to regard his old schoolmaster with affection, and to understand the real disciplinary value of the correction meted out to him. One day the schoolmaster, while out walking, met a group of young men, all of whom were old scholars of the school he had conducted. One of the group, a factory chap, and known as a bit of a character, said, "Now, owd devil, we're gooin' to gi'e thee a dalled good hiding." "Nay, I don't think you will," replied the schoolmaster, good-humoredly, "for when I last had a round with you I beat you all." "That's reet, yo' did," said the young fellow, holding out his hand, "an' we o' gi'en in to yo' to-day."

During the Cotton Famine in the 'sixties, schools were formed to keep the workpeople out of the streets, and though it might be rather pathetic to find that so many full-grown men at that time had actually to start by learning the alphabet, there was an abundance of humour attached to the undertaking. One day these bearded scholars were being taught their letters, first in rotation and then by pointing them out on the blackboard haphazard. Once, when the teacher jumped to the letter "Q," one man exclaimed, "Nay, tha's gi'en us a chiseller now. Tha cornt tell that thisel'!"

Speaking of a hard master and his methods, a

Lancashire man once said to the writer, "Well, I will say this for him. When he promises a chap a day's wark, he keeps his promise!"

The story is told in the same district of a similar kind of master who was one day engaging a new carter. "Have you got your character with you?" he asked of the applicant. "Nowe; but I con soon get one," replied the carter, and it was arranged that the two should have an interview later. Meeting the carter by chance an hour or two afterwards, the master said, "Well, did you get your character?" "Nowe," replied the man, "but I've getten thine, an' I'm noane comin'."

It was a carter who was said to have made an effective retort to a lady who had been holding forth on the cruelty of putting a check rein on his horse. "Bless yo're heart," said the man, "he doesn't mind a check rein, but he'd kick the cart to blazes if I wur to put him i' corsets."

The stories of carters, who are a very humorous and quick-witted class, are legion. Mr. Newbiggin tells a story of a little hunchback who once asked for a job as a carter. "Why, the horse would tread on you," said the employer. "Would he, though!" exclaimed the little man. "He'd ha' to get into t' cart fust!"

The story is mentioned more particularly to draw attention to a curious difference one finds between carters in the North and those in the South. It is clear the employer mentioned hardly calculated upon a carter riding. It is not once in a thousand times that a Lancashire carter will be found riding

upon his laden cart—he will, of course, ride when the cart is empty—but in London and Southern places generally he will ride whatever he may be laden with. In order to do so, he will adopt all kinds of extraordinary contrivances, evidently not at all relishing the idea of trudging along by the side of his horse's head.

Many tales are still told in the Rochdale district of a man named Fletcher, nicknamed "Towzer," who was a notorious successor of Jehu, the son of Nimshi. Once when carting stone from one of the moorland quarries, he incited a number of others to join him in a race with their laden carts down a steep part of the hill into the village below. It was only when the race had started that the danger of the foolhardy trick was fully recognised, and one or two of the carters began to repent of their mad frolic. "Eh!" exclaimed one of the timid ones, "they'll o' be kilt, they'll o' be kilt!" referring, of course, to the plunging and stumbling animals in the shafts. "Howd thi din!" said the imperturbable Jack Towzer, "if there's one wick when we getten to't bottom tha's have it!"

After Jack had got on in the world, he drove a gig instead of a cart, but his fondness for going the pace never abated. One night, coming along the Manchester Road, a companion sitting by his side grew terribly alarmed at the reckless way the high-spirited horse was being driven. He several times appealed to the harum-scarum driver to slacken speed, but Jack, in one of his wildest moods, only urged on his horse the more. "I'd give five

pound if I wur just out of here," said the passenger, now thoroughly frightened. "Howd thi —— noise," said Jack, "tha'll be out for naught in a minute." And sure enough, they had not gone much farther before horse and vehicle collided with the hedge, and both men were flung into the ditch.

Naturally such a driver often fell foul of the police, but Jack never refused to pay for his little escapades. On the day for hearing his summons, he would walk into the police court and, without waiting for his case to be called, step up to the solicitors' table and face the magistrates. "What have I to pay?" he would ask, thrusting his hand into the pocket of his riding breeches. "But we have not yet heard your case, Mr. Fletcher," the presiding magistrate would remark. "Well, never mind that. Tell me what I have to pay, I'm in a hurry." And the magistrates, to oblige him, would call on his case, a policeman would step forward and state that he had seen the defendant somewhere or other driving furiously and to the common danger, and Jack, without troubling to ask questions, would pay the fine and walk out.

Lancashire people are exceedingly fond of joking about a man's looks, and their caustic utterances about and to each other would be taken as deadly insults in parts of the country where their humour was not understood.

"What's to do wi' thee, this mornin'?" one man will say to another, "Tha looks as fou' as a heawnt whelp," and the person addressed will take it nothing amiss. One person will say of another that

he "skens (squints) wur nor a pot cat," referring, of course, to the ugly china and earthenware animals used as ornaments on chests of drawers and dressers in cottages in the country; and sometimes a proud mother, after noting how "fine" her daughter looks when about to start out dressed in her Sunday best, will, not having any other criticism to make, take a shot at her offspring for sprinkling scent about her clothes. "Get away wi' thi," she will say, with a light in her eye which quite belies her words, "tha stinks wur nor a pow (pole) cat!"

Many will no doubt have heard the story of the man who, walking down the road, met a stranger more than usually ill-favoured. Stopping in front of him, he said, "Tha'rt a gradely fou' felly."

The stranger, instead of resenting the personality, replied, "Well, I connot help mi looks, con I?"

"Nowe, I guess tha connot," remarked the man, "but tha met stop awhoam!"

Two merry, but by no means prepossessing, sisters, both maiden ladies, living at a spot in the Whitworth Valley, were also not too complimentary to each other, by all accounts.

Said one to the other one day, "I say, Betty, it's To'morden Fair to-morn. I think I should like to goo."

"Well, if tha goos," said the other sister, "I should get somebody to back thi into't place like a hawss, for if they seen thi face fust, I'm sure they'll never ha' thi within miles o't fair greawnd."

As remarked, such things would be regarded as downright rudeness in another community. In

many cases, of course, the caustic comment is really meant. Take the one, for instance, where a number of working men were taking their dinner together in a place near Montreal. One man much given to boastful talk was asked how he liked his new job. "Oh, very well," he replied, "only it's a bit dusty." "That's a good job," remarked a Lancashire man present, "It'll larn thi to keep thi trap shut!"

One day a number of footballers got into a compartment of a railway carriage where a flashily-dressed young fellow was sitting. As the native has an instinctive dislike of the masher, and also by reason of the fact that this individual did not show himself in the least accommodating to anyone else in the carriage, the newcomers sought an opportunity of "taking him down." One of the footballers at last noticed that the masher's cuffs were not too clean. "I say, kid," he blurted out, "it's about hawve time wi' them cuffs, isn't it? Hadn't they better change ends!"

Akin to this kind of joke, though more good-humoured, is that of the two factory men who were taking a bathe at Blackpool. "I say, Ned," said one to the other, "tha did want a wesh bad." "Did I?" said the other, unconcernedly, "Well, tha knows, I'm three year owder nor thee!"

One could give hundreds of these smart comments and replies. Anyone who knows "Monkey Town" will have heard the story of the two men who decided to make fun of an old stone breaker who sat working by the roadside a little way out of Heywood. One of the men went up to him and

asked him if he had seen a cartload of monkeys go past. "Whaw," said the old man on the instant, "has ta shutter't off?"

One day a farmer's lad going his round milk selling, was accosted by a recruiting sergeant, who asked him how he would like to serve the King.

"Up to't mark!" said the young fellow. "How much does ti think he'd want, a pint or a quart?"

"Does ti drink?" enquired a mill manager of a man who had applied to him for a situation as weaver.

"Nowe," replied the man.

"Does ti smook?"

"Nowe."

"Does ti back hawsses?"

"Nowe."

"Does ti ——"

"Here, owd mon," interrupted the applicant, "I've come after weighvin', not after bein' a pa'son."

The story told of the country bumpkin in training for a boxer has also a distinctly humorous side. An onlooker noticing that the youth was getting very roughly handled, said, "Tha should stop um, tha knows." "I think I am stoppin' um," said the youngster, grimly, "There's noane so mony gooin' past me, onyroad!"

Colliers are credited with many choice examples of repartee, but few equal that classic story told of the parson who admonished a miner for keeping a dog at a time when work was bad to get and food was scarce.

"Look how much better it would be for you and your family if you sold your dog and bought a pig," said the cleric.

"An' a bonny foo' I should look gooin' rattin' wi' a pig," replied the collier.

CHAPTER XI.

CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

An old chap-book speaks of Lancashire as a famous and noted place, abounding with rivers, hills, woods, pastures and pleasant towns, many of which are of great antiquity; and goes on to say that the county has also been famous for witches and the strange pranks they played.

The belief in witchcraft, and, indeed, in almost every form of superstition, was formerly exceedingly common in this part of the country, as is indicated in a large number of homely place-names, and abundantly testified in such works as Roby's "Traditions of Lancashire," and in the stories written by Harrison Ainsworth and others. Indeed, few writers of fiction dealing with witchcraft and demonology but are indebted to the county for its rich store of remarkable facts and records.

To say that superstition has been stamped out even to-day would be a bold assertion, but one can scarcely wonder at country people in remote parts clinging to old beliefs when it is remembered that in London itself some of the blackest forms of heathenism are still practised. The wizard in the Bond Street region now wears a frock-coat and a fashionable tie, but one can still find around him the crystal, crucible, and other weird paraphernalia of a former day. Only recently, professional clairvoyants in the West End were consulted in the hope that light would be thrown on the whereabouts

of a certain missing lady, and although the newspapers were, of course, first of all concerned in getting good "copy," there is no doubt that a good deal of superstitious belief lay behind the various interviews.

Edwin Waugh, in his "Goblin's Grave," makes one of his characters say of the Grizlehurst Boggart, "There isn't a boggart in Lancashire 'at's war to manage nor this when it leets o' folk 'at it doesn't tak' to, noather Clegg Ho' Boggart, nor Yewood Ho' Boggart, nor th' Baum Rappit i' Rachda', nor th' Skrikin' Woman, nor Nut Nan, the wood-tenter, nor Radcliffe Shag, nor noane o' thoose i' Pendle Forest—an' there's some quare uns theer, they sen."

Considering that these famous boggarts were nearly all to be found within a radius of a few miles, it can, to some extent, be imagined what the Lancashire of a bygone day was like in this respect; indeed, it is, curiously enough, to this county, understood to be so supremely given up to commercialism, that we have still to look for many of the lingering evidences of old-time romance in this country. Here it is that old wives' tales of witches and bogles can yet be heard, and where one can have pointed out to him half a dozen haunted halls in the course of an evening's walk. The lover of old customs, too, can be entertained with samples of the mummery which was a characteristic feature of long-gone Eastertides, can see the May Queen crowned with ancient ceremonial, can witness processions of rush-carts, garlands and morris dancers in the autumn, or be serenaded on

Christmas Eve with the kind of "waits" one so often sees pictured on the snow-covered lawn outside the Squire's hall.

Indeed, no county south of the Border displays with its hardheadedness such a curious blend of sentiment. And that steam, and electricity, and travel and "better" education have not eradicated this sentiment is shown by a marked inclination during the past few years to more closely cultivate these old customs. In many places, for example, the Easter festival of the pace, or paschal, egg has shown distinct signs of revival, and one has noticed a quite unusual amount of maypole dancing.

Like so many other things, the survival of old customs often depends to a great extent on the amount of pecuniary support that may be forthcoming, and there is no doubt that the new interest in the play of St. George and the Bold Slasher has been backed of late by more financial encouragement than heretofore. The original object of the mummery—the collection of Easter eggs after the long Lenten fast—is now practically lost sight of, and it is easy to see that it is in the money-box rather than the egg-basket carried by the bedizened old hag called "Dirty Bet," that the hopes of the successors of Bottom and Quince and Starveling are centred. And the festival having lost its ecclesiastical meaning, it now takes place on Good Friday, which is accounted for, no doubt, by the fact that Easter holidays in the North generally begin on Thursday night in Holy Week, and the youngsters take the first opportunity of collecting their fairing.

One or two changes have been made in the presentation of the stirring drama in which the patron saint bares his arm to crush the oppressor, and, incidentally, to teach a lesson to all swashbuckling braggarts. The actors are younger—they are now mere children, in fact—and the stage effects are not so gorgeous as they were in our youth. Strictly speaking, the scene should be "an interior," but doors were closed against the little players long ago, and one has now to take his chance of seeing the performance on "a heath," with God's sky for a cloth, or, if he be less fortunate, with a background of factory chimneys. Sometimes the spectacle is given in the open road, but to this arrangement there are drawbacks. Then one's finest flights of oratory run the risk of being spoiled by a soulless milkman driving his horse and vehicle into the arena, or by another company of strollers disputing the possession of the pitch and challenging the first party to sanguinary combat.

The half-dozen characters are sustained with a grotesqueness and a solemnity that would make a cat laugh. The old, unprinted version is especially nonsensical, and is decidedly the one to see. The words have been passed from mouth to mouth for generations, and many ludicrous effects are produced by attempting to pronounce some of the high-sounding words thus orally transmitted. An entire ignorance of and indifference to the rules of scansion also add to the mirth of the auditor.

The first part of the play would be tragedy, if the element of burlesque was not everywhere apparent.

At the outset, "Open the Door," a nondescript person, steps forward and goes through the farce of demanding entrance to a house where no house is, and shouts:

> Give us room to play—
> Shift those chairs and make a ring,
> And let this dreadful act begin!

St. George, resplendent in scarlet sash and ribbons, and wearing a home-made helmet, then steps forward and, flashing his tin sword, announces, "I am St. George, that noble champion bold!" And having introduced himself so modestly, he, with many flourishes, tells the dragon story, adding, as make-weight, the information, "Many a bloody deed have I made known." Once, however, the redoubtable warrior admits that he was in a tight place—"A giant almost struck me dead, but by my valour I cut off his head"—and, finally, he defies the world to stand and try the strength of his blade.

Whereupon Slasher, a bold, upstart fellow, impulsively springs into the ring and challenges the supremacy of St. George.

The Black Prince (another ambling lad tricked out in gaudy ribbons and armed with an incipient sword) is seen in this play, curiously enough, as a peace-maker. He interferes in the brawl, but is driven out of the field by the following picturesque threat uttered by St. George:—

> Stand off, thou black Morocco dog,
> Or by my sword thou'st die;
> I'll pierce thy body full of holes,
> And make thy buttons fly!

Then begins a comic bout of fencing—("sevens"

is the technical term)—and Slasher is, of course, laid low.

> Oh, George! Oh, George! what hast thou done?
> Thou'st gone and slain mine only son;
> Mine only son, mine only heir,—
> How canst thou abide to see him bleeding there!

Thus the Black Prince, who calls for a doctor, and an individual in an overcoat that trails on the ground and a battered silk hat which falls over his ears, pushes his way through the ring of phlegmatic onlookers and gravely states that he is a member of that profession. But Black Prince, who does not mean to have a quack practising upon "mine only son," puts a hundred questions to him as to qualification before he allows him to approach, heedless of the fact that poor Slasher is in a state of urgent need. Slasher, however, knowing that there is much dialogue forthcoming before the doctor gets to business, shifts his limbs into the most comfortable positions the hard ground will allow, and calmly listens to what is going forward.

After assuring the Black Prince that he has a specific that "will raise any dead man to life again," the doctor stoops over the unfortunate Slasher and says, "Here, Jack, take a little of my bottle and let it run down thy throttle, and if thou be not quite slain, rise, Jack, and fight again."

The Black Prince, however, is still fearful, and exclaims, "Oh, doctor, doctor, that's no cure," and the medico seeks to inspire confidence by boasting that he can not only cure men, but is an expert in dealing with "lame ducks" and "blind hummer-

bees," and that his equipment includes "pack-saddles and panniers for grasshoppers," among other wonders.

At the second dose, Slasher rises, but to excuse his sudden resuscitation, complains that he has still some pains in the back!

The honour of the dragon-slayer now being satisfied, the play assumes an aspect of still broader comedy, if possible, and Beelzebub, Dirty Bet, and other characters come forward and introduce themselves in nonsensical rhyme. When all have been through their parts, they parade for show in pantomime fashion to the accompaniment of a chanty, which begins:—

> The first that does step in,
> It is old Open-the-Door;
> And lads, if you'll believe me,
> He's opened many a score!
> Right falary-laddie, Right falary-lido!

Each character is eulogised in turn, and when the circle is complete they show the real motive of the enterprise by singing:

> We're all for beer, we're all for beer,—
> Play at fuddling, lads—away!

In addition to the Easter mummery, the county observes other quaint customs at that time of the year. Although the practice of egg-rolling is met with in various Catholic countries in Europe, it is believed that Preston, in Lancashire, is the only place where it assumes such proportions as to justify its description as a popular festival. People come from far and near to witness the carnival which

takes place every Easter Monday in the spacious amphitheatre at Avenham Park. To this spot troops of juveniles, attended by their elder relatives, bring great store of dyed, hard-boiled eggs. These they roll on the ground until they are broken, and then they are devoured.

The Rushbearing, as its name indicates, is a survival of the time when the people of a parish went in festive mood to the moors to gather the rushes which were used in churches as a floor covering before carpets became available. The cart upon which the rushes were carried was converted for the occasion into a triumphal car, drawn by gaily dressed youths and accompanied by bands of music and morris dancers. Nowadays, of course, there are not many to be seen, but children still preserve the old custom by putting flowering heather on garlands made of fancy, coloured paper, and hung with bells and ornaments of various kinds. The festival is held about August, when the mills close for the annual holidays, but it is only in the older towns that the name is still preserved, the holiday in most places being known as the "Wakes."

The one custom which shows no sign of falling away, however, is that of carol singing at Christmas, due partly to the sentiment which attaches to the season, and in a great measure to the fact that the Lancastrians are a music-loving people. In the South the custom has degenerated into a mere cadging nuisance, which begins six weeks or two months before Christmas is due; but in Lancashire the "waits" are what they call themselves—

"Christmas singers"—who do not begin their rounds until the clock has struck twelve on Christmas Eve. Then, until daylight, the whole countryside rings with a pastoral symphony in which every choir, glee party, and brass band joins with great heartiness and effect.

It may be of interest to note that the hymn, "Christians, Awake, Salute the Happy Morn!" without which no "Christmas singing" would be complete, was composed at Kersal, on the outskirts of the city of Manchester, by Dr. John Byrom. The original MS. of the hymn is carefully preserved in the Cheetham Library in Manchester, and is headed "Christmas Day for Dolly," Dolly being the author's little daughter. The words of the hymn got into the hands of Wainwright, the organist of the Manchester Parish Church, and he set them to the now well-known tune of "Yorkshire."

A number of smaller festivals are becoming less and less observed year by year; some, indeed, have altogether ceased to be kept by the present generation. Before all parts of the country made an attempt to synchronise their Christmas and New Year holidays, the "first markets" of the year were made much of, and then it was that all kinds of entertainments were held, including those old public-house club "dinner days," so long looked forward to by village folk and so heartily enjoyed.

Then would come Shrovetide with its "pancake stirs," gatherings at which each guest had to toss his own pancake and eat it before the next one was cooked, or suffer very undignified penalties; and

after that Mid-Lent Sunday, when people from far and near wended their way to Bury to eat the toothsome simnel cake. April Fool Day, of course, was hugely enjoyed by our boisterous forebears, as was also that eve of mad frolic, "Mischief Neet," when careful housewives made a point of locking up their mops and brushes and pails, and when pedestrians had to go warily if they would avoid the many pitfalls laid for them by impish youth.

"Spo," or "Spa," Sunday, the first Sunday in May, was a day when crowds went away to the moors, and there filled their bottles at the water springs, evidently under the impression that they were following the example of those who visit the fashionable spas. It was, and still is, a day of much anxiety to the moor-keepers, owing to a mischievous delight shown by rowdies for "swaleing," or setting fire to the dry grass and bracken, thereby thoughtlessly killing the young grouse, and sometimes blighting a whole tract of country with deep-burrowing fires which take weeks and all the mechanical resources of the neighbouring towns to extinguish.

"Sapling Day," when the carters stuck sprigs of oak in their caps and horses' halters, was, presumably, some Jacobite institution for marking the escape of Charles the Second from his pursuers after the Battle of Worcester, by climbing into the branches of the friendly oak; and there was also "brunfire time," when it was the thing to do to make and eat round a bonfire "tharcake" and toffy, the first-named being a confection compounded of oat-

meal, treacle, butter, and ginger. There were, too, special romantic observances for All Hallows and other Eves, and many pleasant festivities connected with the ingathering of the harvest.

Some time, it is to be hoped, some enthusiast will do for the North what the Rev. S. Baring-Gould and others have done in kindred matters for the West-country—make a comprehensive study of children's games in Lancashire and elsewhere. Scarcely one of these songs is to be found in the printed books which appear either on the nursery bookshelf or the table of the student of folk lore, and yet they are, without a doubt, both as to form and rhyme, about as quaint and delightfully nonsensical as anything it has been the writer's fortune to meet with. To pass through some old village "fold" on an evening in summer, while yet the northern light lingers and the children have not been called to their beds, is, one makes bold to say, to see as curious a lot of ring and other games as one could well imagine, and to hear more old chanties than one would find elsewhere on land in a twelvemonth.

The mention of these games reminds the writer of a little incident which occurred during a tour in Brittany some time ago. Along with two journalist friends, he one day found himself at a wayside station with an indefinite time to wait for a train. There had been a collision on the line, and the good lady who acted as station master, porter, and signalman, stated that it might be one, two, or three hours before a train could get through. While in this

predicament, all the juvenile population of the neighbourhood gathered to inspect and comment upon the dress, kit, and general appearance of "les anglaises," and to shout the only words of a foreign language they had mastered, "Engleesh, penny!" "Engleesh, penny!"

After trying all kinds of ways to while away the time—for it was impossible to leave the station, seeing that the overdue train might any moment come along—a fortunate idea struck the writer. Gathering the little Bretons together, as well as the necessary stones for the purpose, he began to initiate the youngsters into the simple but fascinating game of "duck-stone," as played anywhere between Mildro' and Chowbent. It was a huge success. All national differences vanished on the instant, and soon the place was ringing with a laughter such as had not been heard in that part of old France for many a long day. That Lancashire game, played within a stone's-throw of a church dating from mediæval times, and by a group of children as charming as are to be found in any part of the world, will never be forgotten, at least by those three touring Englishmen, for they are sure to hear the shouts of laughter ringing in their ears whenever their thoughts turn to that old land of chivalry and romance.

Speaking of children's games, one is reminded of one or two other juvenile observances peculiar to the county. One is of very ancient origin. It relates to Christmas, when children in certain localities were led to expect a mysterious personage

called the Pieman, who made a yearly visit with a load of apple and giblet pies. His way, the elders said, lay over Pendle Hill. The pies came, but never the Pieman, he being, of course, the good fairy we now call Santa Claus.

Another custom, mostly indulged in by children, is that of "lugging" on birthdays. What its origin can be, or even its meaning, is obscure. So far as one has been able to see, it is never practised outside the family circle, and may possibly have something to do with that inborn distaste for using needless words to express feelings and sentiments that must be obvious. Presents may or may not be made, but in many homes the "lugging" ceremony is never omitted. Instead of the spoken wish, every member of the family will, on rising in the morning, go and playfully pull the hair of the one who is celebrating a birthday. It is a custom as curious as that of giving small money presents to children each time they don a new suit of clothes.

The mention of strange, out-of-the-way customs calls to mind another, though not a juvenile one, and one which one fears has passed with much of the old-fashioned kind of hospitality. It is that of "gooin' a gate," the term in the dialect for going a little distance along the road. When a person visited a friend and stayed until after nightfall, the friend would in all likelihood insist upon accompanying the visitor some little way towards his home. It was an act of great courtesy and consideration, and no doubt had something to do with

the days when the roads were not so safe as they are at the present day.

A great distinction must be made between town and country folk even to-day, but everywhere old customs have gone by the board with the passing of the handloom. The old woollen weavers, who made such picturesque figures as they stood in their blue aprons enjoying a pipe and a chat outside those gaunt, three-storeyed houses one can yet see in the country, were just the kind of men to keep old sayings and customs and festivals alive. They were not automatons driven in and out of their "loom-houses" by bell or hooter; they were a class who laid down their shuttles when they heard the huntsman's horn, or when any festivity offered, and then, maybe, took the lost time out of their sleep, working and slaving by candle-light to "down" their pieces by the appointed time.

Their successors in the monstre, power-driven mills in the towns have entirely different interests and amusements. They have lost the taste for simple joys, and cannot exist without a visit to theatre or music-hall once or twice a week. That they cherish few illusions is demonstrated in a thousand ways, and they are blasè before they are in their teens. One of the papers some time ago told of a boy of ten who was quite beyond the control of his parents. He had a comfortable home, but preferred to sleep out, the police at times discovering him in some extraordinary places. Having several times been found sleeping in a wood, the keeper, with the connivance of the parents, tried to

frighten him away from his haunts. He dressed up as a "ghost"—that is to say, covered himself with a white sheet such as all respectable ghosts wear when they appear in public—and thus attired confronted the boy in his woodland roost. What was the keeper's surprise when the boy, far from betraying any fear, challenged the apparition thus: "Now, then, what arti after, lad!"

The factory folk of to-day have few links with the past beyond the footgear they wear. The clog they still have with them, although, of course, it has undergone much modification since it was first introduced in the form of a sabot by the old Flemish weavers. All have a leather "upper" and a rim of iron nailed round the soles, but there are, nevertheless, many distinct styles. Some, indeed, are quite works of art, with their crimped leather, their dandified cut, and their blaze of brass-headed nails. Colliers are especially vain, and pay some fancy prices for their elaborate "Sunday clogs."

It may be remarked, by the way, that the wearing of clogs, once considered a distinctive mark of the Lancashire cotton operative, is now becoming general with factory workers in other parts of the country, and the Lancashire clogging trade, far from showing a falling off, is continually finding fresh markets. The trade finds regular employment for over ten thousand men, and one leading firm frequently despatches large consignments to London, where clogs are worn by the workers in chemical and other similar works. So far, however, the Londoner cannot bring himself to walk to and from his

work in his simple footgear, but even this is thought to be only a matter of time.

Out of modern conditions has risen one curious occupation worth mentioning. One of the demands made upon mill workers is that they shall rise betimes, and in order that they shall be at their looms and spindles when the inexorable "buzzer" goes, the services of a professional "knocker-up" are engaged. In places like Oldham it is a business having certain recognised privileges, and the persons who follow it indicate their calling by means of cards placed in their windows. Leaving his bed every morning at four o'clock, the "knocker up," usually an old man who is past work in his own particular line, is soon afterwards in the streets. He meets nobody but the friendly policeman as he goes from house to house and taps with a long stick at the bedroom windows of the workers, who pay him a few pence a week for his trouble. These men, as may be imagined, have to face many cold and bitter mornings in the course of a year, but they are known, nevertheless, as a jovial, joking fraternity.

CHAPTER XII.

HIBERNIAN CHARACTERISTICS.

Owing, no doubt, to that distinctly Celtic strain which is still to be found in some parts of the county, Lancashire men are often mistaken for Irishmen. It is small wonder, for their quick-wittedness, quaintness of outlook, and oddity of expression are often quite Hibernian in character.

The stranger is perfectly astonished at the number of laughable things he will hear wherever Lancashire men and women, especially of the working class, are gathered together. During a short journey in a crowded railway carriage on the easterly side of the county, a friend of the writer from another part of the country was so struck with the joking and badinage of the occupants that he exclaimed, "Why, they are all born humorists!"

"Blarney," perhaps, is much less noticeable, but the untutored Lancashire mind is quite capable of the "bulls" and whimsicalities which are branded as peculiarly Irish. In the place of "blarney," one finds what is locally known as "awvishness," a species of humour which has nothing to do with subtle flattery, being chiefly founded upon pretended ignorance. Irish people, according to the author of "Irish Life and Character," are quite unconscious of the quaintness and oddity of their views; they do not mean to be funny, but use the expressions which naturally come to their lips. The effort, speaking generally, is more intentional on the

part of the Lancashire man, and there is usually just sufficient in the remark or exclamation to show that the humour is fully meant.

A good example of the sly humour known as "awvishness" was told to the writer some time ago by a Rochdale Guardians' official. One day, when a man who had long been a burden to the rates came before the relief committee, the chairman, with exhausted patience, said, "Look here, my man, are you not ashamed to be seen coming here week after week and month after month for relief?"

"Well," replied the man, confidentially, "between you and me I will say that I am, an' before I come in I allus have a look up and down t' road to see 'at there's nobody about 'at knows me!"

This wilfully humorous way of turning the telescope to the blind eye comes up again and again in the Lancashire character.

The following example of assumed "gawmlessness" forms an even better illustration of this characteristic. One day, a working man returning home for his mid-day meal was met by his wife, who was hurrying to make a purchase before one of the shops closed.

"Tha'll find a beef-steak puddin' i't pon," she said, "an' I'll get back as soon as I con."

When she returned she asked if he had had his dinner.

"Aah," he said.

"Then tha fun' t' puddin' i't pon?"

"Aah," he said again.

"An' tha poo'd t' clout off?"

"Whaw," he said, a look of wonder on his face, "wur there a clout on!"

Examples could be multiplied a thousandfold. Some time ago a man went into a grocer's shop and asked the price of candles, and was told by the shopman that they had gone up twopence a pound owing to the war. "Well, I never!" exclaimed the man. "Tha doesn't m'yen to say they're feightin' bi candleleet, doesti!"

A cabby at the Blackburn Police Court once contended that he had been given a certain disputed half-crown as a tip and not as journey money. "Did it never strike you that half a crown was rather a large sum for this man to give as a tip," asked the magistrate. "Nowe, I dunnot know as it did," was the reply. "Well, I should have thought sixpence would have been sufficient," observed the J.P. "Aah, I dar' say yo' would," remarked the cabby, drily, and with just sufficient accent on the pronoun to make it more amusing than impertinent.

A young woman living in the same locality was one day going down a lane on her way to a farm-house, but not exactly knowing which turning to take, she decided to ask a lad she saw coming towards her. Instead, however, of asking him the way to the farm, she said, "Hey, mi lad, con I get through this gate?" Eyeing her critically from head to foot, he replied: "I should think tha con. A looad o' hay went through this mornin'."

Mr. MacDonagh states in his book that the "Yorkshire and Lancashire Agricultural Society"

fell into a funny error on the appearance of Miss Edgeworth's Irish "Bulls." Several copies of the work were ordered for the use of members of the society, who were disappointed to find that the bulls were mere creatures of the brain and not, as they had expected, robust animals pastured on the rich grazing lands of Meath and Limerick.

Unfortunately for this story, there does not happen to be a "Yorkshire and Lancashire Agricultural Society," and so far, at least, as one of these counties is concerned, it is hard to suppose that the only bulls its people were acquainted with were those that could be taken by the horns. There are "bulls" made in Lancashire which would do any Dublin jarvey credit.

The following, we venture to think, has the true quality of the "bull," being a perfectly natural expression and quite understandable. A foreman of works, asked by a young fellow for a berth, replied: "Well, there's a lad here 'at hasn't comed, an' if he doesn't come at dinner time I'll send him whoam, an' tha con have his job."

And if the above is a "bull," the following, from a Lancashire paper, must certainly be an animal of the same species:—"A nervous old lady and a companion were one day crossing a field in which a number of cows were grazing. One cow, in particular, stared very hard at the old lady, who, terribly frightened, turned to her companion and exclaimed:

'Hey! let us run, for when a cow stares at yo' like that it's a bull!'"

The reprimand made by the wife of a Lancashire sexton—"Tha hasn't buried a wick sowl this fortnit, tha idle thing!"—brings to mind the best native Irish "bull" the writer ever heard. It was in London, at a meeting of the Chartered Company, after some strong criticism had been passed on the conduct of the company's affairs. The Duke of Abercorn was in the chair, but he called upon Mr. Rochefort Maguire to answer some of the questions. Mr. Maguire, whose nationality could not be mistaken, said in answer to one critic, "There's a gentleman over there who just now said that we wanted another Cecil Rhodes to put us on the right tack again. Do we not all know that! But let me remind the gentleman who talked so much about Cecil Rhodes that we may all of us be in our graves before we see his like again!"

The number of quaintly-confused statements made by the Lancashire man which do not quite touch the level of the "bull" are infinite. For one thing, he is fond of a droll paradox, and loves also that peculiar mode of generalisation which first allows of an exception, and then shows that even the exception does not exist. He will say, "There's chettery i' o' trades 'obbut besom makin', an' then they putten t' short uns i't middle!" "We's ha' to live till we dee—if t' dogs dunnot worry us," he remarks, and it is his opinion that "There's naught so quare as folk—nobbut women."

When he is watching from his window the approach of a wild, stormy night, he will say in his odd way that "them folk's weel off 'at han no

whoam to go to!" and of an ugly dog he meets in the road he will say that he "never seed a nice dog 'at favvort that." He will talk, too, of a man suiting a hat, rather than of the hat suiting the man, and in a thousand ways put the cart before the horse.

Whichever way one turns, one meets with topsy-turvy sayings and unexpected and surprising views of things. Edwin Waugh, in one of his poems, speaks of a doctor who called upon an old woman who had just lost her husband. To his query as to whether the old man had had a doctor, she replied, "He had no doctor, he deed ov hissel'!"

An anxious old woman, admonishing her drunken son, said, "Eh! John, tha'rt shortening thy days." "Never mind, mother," replied the graceless scamp, "I'm lengthening mi neets!"

The "Pall Mall Gazette" some time ago published the following paragraph, the dialect of which indicates its Lancashire origin:—A rather good story touching the idea prevalent in some quarters that Marconi's experiments have had a great deal to do with the late unsettled weather comes to us from the North country, though possessing a decided Hibernian flavour. An old farmer said to a friend: "A lot o' folk are talkin' abeaut this electricity in these wires makin' us have so mich rain, but what I want to know is, how is it 'at it didn't make it rain last spring when we had a week or two o' dry weather and nowt grooin'? I corn't believe that —— tale, con ta?"

The writer was once present in a house when the

nurse, an old Lancashire woman, announced to the happy father the birth of a second child, a son, he having already a daughter. Putting her head round the door for a moment she quaintly remarked, "Well, yo'n as mony sorts as onybody now!" and without further explanation vanished.

The native of any particular county would be a bold man who tried to father such stories as that of the man who said that elephants were hunted for their whalebone, or of the one who, having bought an iron bedstead, remarked, to justify his extravagance, that it could always be chopped up into firewood when he had done with it, but more than one dull-witted carter in localities in Lancashire where the writer has lived has been accused of having climbed into his cart and held up some portion of the load "to ease the horse."

There is something Hibernian, too, in the story of the football referee who, when complained to by a player who said an opponent had threatened to "punce his bloomin' yed off," replied: "Well, let him do it, an' I'll order him off t' field."

The examples could be multiplied to an infinite number. There is, for instance, the story of the worker-out, who on being remonstrated with for not providing for a rainy day, said: "Well, I knowed a chap as once saved about twelve pound again't frost coom, but it never coom that year at o', an' he had o' that brass thrown on his honds!"

A man living in Darwen—a lifelong teetotaller—was one day pressed by his friends to take some liquor on the ground that as he was getting on in

years it would do him good. "Nowe, I'll not tak' it," he replied. "I've lived beawt it o' mi life, an' if I cornt dee beawt it, I'll live for ever."

There is, too, the story of the lad who said he did not know where Australia was, as he had never been any further nor his "Aunt Sarah's i' Bowton," and the saying about "Lucky Lambert," who was dubbed "lucky" because he had "fun' a haw'penny an' brokken a window."

Two of the stories are worthy of Andy Andy himself.

"Tom, did you take that note to Mr. Jackson?" asked a master of his servant.

"Aah, I took it, but I dunnot think he could read it."

"Why, Tom?"

"Becose he's so blynt. While I wor i't reawm he axed me twice wheer mi hat wur, an' it wur on mi yed o't time."

The other story is of a labourer who carried two planks while his fellow-workmen only carried one, because he was lazy and wished to save himself the trouble of going backwards and forwards!

Naturally, many examples of this Hibernian humour appears in connection with the taking of the census. On one occasion a census clerk, in scanning one of the forms to see that it had been properly filled up, noticed the figures "120" and "112" under the headings "Age of father, if living," and "Age of mother, if living."

"But your parents are never so old, are they?" queried the astonished clerk.

"Nowe," was the reply, "but they would ha' bin 'if livin'!"

Many will no doubt have heard of the extensive family man who, on reading the newly-published census returns, was struck with amazement at the fact that the record only showed an increase of seven in the part where he lived. "That's o' mi eye," he said. "I know betther. I've put on moore nor that misel'!"

Elsewhere in this book are given a number of colliers' stories, but one, at least, would be out of place if not given under this heading. It relates to a man whose clock had stopped in the night, and the only way he could do was to go outside and ask the time of the first passer by. On a man coming along and telling him it was half-past five, the collier exclaimed, "By gum, I mun goo in an' get up!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

It has been remarked that the Lancastrian shares in some degree the peculiarity of the typical Scotsman, in becoming more patriotic the further he wanders from home. This is very true. Once outside the borders of his county, he becomes quite arrogant in his pride, and stoutly contends that there are no places and no folks anywhere like his own. At home he may be the most self-contained person imaginable; abroad, he will do anything for his clan.

The love of Lancashire by Lancastrians is quite extraordinary. Again and again one marks this affectionate devotion in her sons, no matter where or how they find themselves situated. The good Bishop of Exeter, Hugh Oldham, "out of the good mind he bore to his native county of Lancaster," and perceiving that the children thereof, having pregnant wits, were for the most part brought up rudely and idly, founded the free grammar school of Manchester. This was centuries ago, but the same spirit is to be found expressing itself in good works to this day.

One has only to look through some standard book of biography to see how proudly distinguished Lancastrians state their places of birth, no matter how humble or obscure, and those who know something of the way the affairs of such an excellent society as that of the Association of Lancastrians in London

are administered, are aware how jealous those in authority are of anything affecting her good name.

Not long ago that well-known Lancastrian, Judge Edge, took a defendant severely to task at the Clerkenwell County Court for having cast reflections on Manchester business methods. "How can you ask me, a Lancashire man, to believe that?" he queried, contemptuously, with regard to one of the statements. "I know something of Manchester men, and this is not their way of doing business."

Lord Derby, presiding at one of the dinners given by the Association of Lancastrians in London, gave some interesting instances of the devotion of Lancastrians to their county and their determination to hold together. He remembered how, on the occasion of a visit he once paid to Toronto, he found there an enthusiastic and warm-hearted colony of Lancastrians, and the kind thought occurred to one of their leaders to invite all his fellow-Lancastrians within a distance of a hundred and fifty miles to assemble and welcome him at one of the pleasantest garden parties he had ever attended. His lordship went on to say that those who had first suggested the London Association had read truly the hearts of the sons of their county, for one characteristic was possessed by them more than by natives of other counties—the power of holding different opinions and yet of coalescing for the good of their county. That Association, he pointed out, embraced all classes, communities, creeds and political beliefs.

Many country people who go to live in London like to adopt Metropolitan airs, and whenever they

can they are ready to forget the provincial places that gave them birth. Not so the Lancastrian. If anything, he rather errs on the other side, and is apt to try and belittle the many attractions and advantages of the Metropolis and insist too strongly on those things in which his own county is better equipped and farther advanced.

As indicated, he is seldom or never ashamed of his place of origin. One day, a number of brakes and waggonettes filled with men were making a tour of London streets for sight-seeing purposes. The excursionists were in lively mood, and their voices and laughter carried far beyond their immediate neighbourhood. As the company drove past St. James's Barracks, a well-dressed man was seen to halt and take great interest in the procession. When the last vehicle came abreast of him he shouted eagerly, "Where do you come from?" "We come fro' Rachda," shouted back one of the trippers. "Hooray!" exclaimed the stranger, forgetting his "fine" town manners and wildly waving his hat, "I come fro' Owdham mysel'!"

But, strange to say, the Lancashire man at home is an entirely different being. He is undemonstrative towards his fellows, and loves to ridicule every place but his own. The largest towns set the example. Manchester "Men" and Liverpool "Gentlemen," for instance, are always trying to "take a rise" out of each other. At the time the Manchester Ship Canal was projected, the feeling amounted to open hostility, and even now Liverpool, pluming itself on its long existence as a port and

its superior seagoing knowledge, makes out that Manchester, for all its docks and shipping, does not yet know the stern from the stem of a boat, but always speaks of the "round end" and the "pointed end!"

When the Midland Railway Company built their splendid new hotel in Manchester, the Liverpudlian was equally sarcastic, and one of his newspapers appeared one morning with the following paragraph:—George W. Fibabit, a man and a brother from the State of Ohio, visited Manchester with a native of that village. As they left the Central Station the Mancunian pointed to the new hotel and said, "What do you think of that?" George W. paused, deliberately surveyed the building from roof to basement, and replied, "Vury fine, vury fine; seems a bit big, though!" "Ah!" replied the gratified native, "you see, a great many people come to Manchester." "Wal," drawled George W., "that is so, but it's vury extensive for such a purpose." "Oh, come now," said the Manchester man, with a patronising smile, "in America you have hotels nearly as large." George W. stood still. "Ho-tel!" he cried, "is that a ho-tel? I thought it was the ticket office of the Midland Railway!"

Not long ago a writer in one of the Blackburn papers remarked upon the strange aloofness existing between Preston and Blackburn in political as well as in commercial and social relations. "I cannot remember," he said, "that the Members of Parliament for the over-Ribble town have ever spoken in Blackburn, and if the Members for Blackburn have

ever addressed meetings of Prestonians, the occasions are so rare as to have escaped recollection."

In country districts this peculiarity is even more pronounced. Everything is done to make the inhabitants of a neighbouring place look ignorant and foolish. One part will be known for having built walls round a field to keep the cuckoo from flying away; another for having inhabitants so "gawmless" as to have attempted to rake a pond on a moonlight night under the impression that a big cheese was floating in the water; while the people of nearly every town or village are dubbed with some playful name, such as "monkeys," "rough yeds," "trotters," and so forth. When there are no other means of disparaging a place, reports will be spread of its abnormally inclement weather. Railway porters are supposed to have informed strangers that the first station they arrive at where it is raining they had better get out, as that will be the town they are seeking.

There are many places of which it is alleged that the inhabitants were formerly obliged to notch a stick to keep count of the days, and one village has still the reputation of having inhabitants so benighted that they cannot tell the day of the week without some extraneous aid, and have to put seven potatoes in the window sill and take one out every day. When they come to the last they know it is Sunday, and can don their best clothes.

Naturally, when chronometers and calendars were less common than now, there were many stories told to illustrate the supposed haziness of the

countryman with regard to matters of time and space. It is said that once when a farmer was bringing a flock of sheep across the hills from Bolton-by-Bowland, a woman on the far moorside came out of her cottage and called "What time is it?" The farmer shouted back, "Three o'clock," and then added, "Han yo' no clocks up theer?" "Nowe," came the reply, carried down the wind. "Whaw, how dun yo' manage, then?" queried the farmer. "Oh," said the woman, in a doggerel which is no doubt as mythical in its origin as herself,

> We eat when we're hungry,
> We sup when we're dry;
> Go to bed when we're weary,
> And get up when we comt lie!

Stories of this character are told with relish everywhere. Recently, one of the papers appeared with the following yarn:—Some time ago the writer and a friend were passing through a small village situate between Bury and Bolton, a very out of the way place where, I believe, the residents used to forget the day of the week before the advent of the cockle and mussel man, who now comes to the village every Friday. It was at this place where we saw an unusual scene. Three men were endeavouring to wind up a cow with a pulley to the top of a house, the roof of which was covered with grass. As we neared the men were about to give up the job, when my friend inquired what it was they wished to do. One of the men replied, "We want to get this cow up theer to heyt that gress off." My friend said he could tell them of a plan even better than that.

The man looked astonished, and asked, "What is it?" "Why," said my friend, "get your scythe, cut the grass, and bring it down to the cow." "Well, by gum, we never thought o' that. Sithi what book larnin' 'll do!"

The towns as well as the villages are not exempt from this kind of chaff, and not one of them comes in for such playful reference as Oldham, which, notwithstanding the special position it holds in the cotton industry, is but of mushroom growth compared with many Lancashire towns, and has never had the reputation of being overburdened with modesty. One has, for instance, often heard people in other towns say to a person who considered himself extra smart, "Oh, tha'rt too fause for this world, tha ought to goo an' live i' Owdham!"

In "Jone o' Greenfielt's Ramble," which is the piece chosen to represent Lancashire in "Bell's Ballads of the Peasantry"—and is, by the way, about the most humorous thing in the book—it is shown that Oldham has long been the butt of the local wits. When Jone declares that

> A so'ger I'll be, un brave Owdham I'll see,
> Un I'll ha'e a battle wi' th' French,

Aunt Marget pretends to interfere.

> Then says my Aunt Marget, "Ah! Jone, thee'rt so hot,
> I'd ne'er go to Owdham, but i' England I'd stop!"

The remark of the editor of these ballads, by the way, that one of the most striking peculiarities of the Lancashire dialect is that in words ending in *ing* the termination is changed into *ink*, will be news to most Lancashire people. The present

writer has certainly never heard people so far north as Lancashire say, "Booath clemmink, un starvink, un never a fardink."

One sometimes wonders, remarked a writer in the "Manchester Guardian" some time ago, how certain towns and places come by their reputation, and how, when once it is obtained, that reputation sticks to them. Take Preston, for instance. Its pride and poverty combined have been unkindly immortalised in the Lancashire folklore rhyme, "Proud Preston, poor people; eight bells in a crackt steeple." Wigan, on the other hand, which was once one of the most noted bell-founding centres in the country, seems to have been notorious for wickedness. Many people have heard the sobriquet, "Wiggin-Hearty-Christers," which one authority tells us is a jocular term applied to the people of Wigan. It alludes, we are told, to a form of oath peculiar to the place, especially among the colliers. But to-day a stranger may sojourn in the Wigan district for long and never hear this invocation.

When John Wesley first went to Wigan, he made a note in his diary to the effect that the place was "proverbially famous for all manner of wickedness," but when he went to "Wicked Wigan" a quarter of a century later he wrote, "It is not now what it was. The inhabitants in general have taken a softer mould."

Another place to which the darkness of a long past reputation clings is Chowbent. In 1774 Wesley wrote: "I preached at a preaching house

just built at Chowbent, which was lately a den of lions; but they are all now as quiet as lambs." For some unaccountable reason Chowbent has, too, always been a byword amongst Lancashire people for remoteness and "gawmlessness."

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that the Lancashire habit of "calling down" a neighbouring town or village is a strong American characteristic. English lecturers who have been through the States will tell you that there is nothing that will please the average American audience so much as to playfully allude to the "one-horse" peculiarities of the last town in which they stayed, while the native humorists trade on this little weakness to an extraordinary extent. It is not suggested, of course, that Lancashire's influence is to be found in this transatlantic similarity, although it would be interesting for the curious to note how far the thousands of emigrants from the County Palatine have impressed their individuality upon the social life, the character, and especially the speech, of many important industrial centres in America.

CHAPTER XIV.

"SPRAWNGING" AND PRACTICAL JOKING.

NOTHING so delights a small Lancashire community as to have in its midst a thorough-going Baron Munchausen. To them he fills the place of the wandering minstrel of old, and especially appeals to that imaginative race which lives within range of the wide, lone, mysterious Pennine moors.

He is known locally as a "sprawnger," and is a totally different person to the braggart and the intentional liar. He is a licensed romancer, who can take any matter of local or general interest and embellish or improve upon it from his own presumably unrivalled experience, which has the appearance of having been gathered in every land and in every clime. A plausible scamp of the "slack-back" class, in all likelihood, he nevertheless is an institution which adds greatly to the enjoyment of village life. His "pulpit" may not be more imposing than a stool in the shop of the village cobbler, a seat in the taproom at the alehouse, or even a stand at some street corner lounging place, but his humorous comment on men and things will in all probability be much more widely canvassed than anything that falls from the lips of the most learned clerk in holy orders.

There is, too, a perfect understanding between the sprawnger and his audience—such an understanding

as Kipling mentions as existing "When 'Omer smote his bloomin' lyre."

They knew 'e stole; 'e knew they knowed,
They didn't tell, nor make a fuss,
But winked at 'Omer down the road,
An' 'e winked back—the same as us!

The present writer was fortunate to be brought up in a district where there were several good sprawngers. One of these entertained the youth of the place for hundreds of hours, and when he very fittingly emigrated to America it proved to be a real loss to the community. Another, an older man, was in the habit of disappearing for weeks at a time, and never came home but he had some of the queerest and "flaysomest" tales to tell of his travels one ever heard.

The dialect writers have, as might be expected, made great use of both the sprawnger and the practical joker. Ben Brierley gave a good sample of sprawnging when he told of the discovery of a new bird, the sand bird, a native of the Sahara Desert. When windy, it was in the habit of flying tail first to keep the sand out of its eyes. Edwin Waugh has written some famous stories of practical joking. Few tales are so funny as those of "Besom Ben" and his donkey, and the one of "Owd Bodle" climbing the chimney for a quart of ale is a classic.

Not long ago the present writer paid a visit to the scene of Owd Bodle's adventure, and was surprised to find the house in the hands of aliens who had never even heard of the story Jone o'

Jeffrey's told about a former occupant of the place. Some of Owd Neddy Nutter's descendants they knew slightly, but in all but one respect the old traditions of the little "Hoosnam" alehouse had departed. Of that exception the writer was to have immediate and convincing proof. While sitting conjuring up the "marlocking" of other times, he was suddenly aroused by the crash of falling crockery, the overturning of tables and forms, and the noise of scuffling feet. A slow and heavy tread in the lobby, and then a solemn-looking landlord put his head in at the door of the room where the writer was sitting. "He's feightin' again," he said to a strapping serving lass, whereupon the girl, who seemed to have the full measure of her customers, hurriedly left for the taproom, and a moment later her voice was raised in vehement protest. "Eh, tha'rt a bad un, tha'rt a bad un! Come, be gooin', tha drunken heawnt." And quietly obeying the young woman, a big, loose-limbed man lurched out of what, presumably, was the self-same room where Bodle so handsomely earned his quart of ale, and sullenly shuffled down the lobby and out into the road.

The kind of thing America has become famous for—the "whopper"—is one form of sprawnging in which the Lancashire man shows a fair proficiency. One or two samples went the rounds of the papers some time ago, and well illustrate the native idea of the tall story. After hearing a Welshman boast of the height of Snowdon, a Lancashire lad said: "Hasti never bin i' Owdham?

Then tha's never seen Platt's chimbley, 'at's so heigh tha conna see't top for smook. When it gets out o' order, they han to send up a steeple-jack to fettle it; an' one day, one o' these felleys, bein' a chap fond o' tryin' o' sorts o' dodges, covered hissel' all o'er wi' indy-rubber, so 'at he'd be o' reet if he fell. Well, up he goes to fettle t' chimbley, an' sure enough deawn he comes. An' what does ti' think? Atstid o' gettin' kilt, he just started bouncin', an' he kept on bouncin', an' he bounced for days. If tha'll believe me, he bounced so long 'at they had to shoot him at last to stop him fro' clemmin' to't dyeath!"

It is said that a Yankee, boasting about his hatching hens, was once silenced by a Lancashire man, who exclaimed, "Whaw, that's naught. I' Ribchester, we allus fill a barrel wi' eggs, an' set th' owd hen on't bunghole!"

The writer once heard a group of people talking of Polar exploration, and sprawnging about the extreme cold which was sometimes experienced by the men engaged in the work. "Whaw," said one, "I've yheard 'at it's so cowd sometimes 'at it freezes t' words as t' Captain speighks 'um, an' 'at sailors han to put 'um in a saucepon an' warm 'um afore they con tell what he says!"

The sprawnger is seldom a practical joker. He is simply a man who deals in pleasant exaggèration, and is on quite a different plane to the idiot who delights in putting obstacles in passage-ways, or sending a procession of sweeps to a man's house in the early morning. He is not often a scandal-

monger, even; he is just a harmless romancer.

Speaking generally, practical joking is not at all what it used to be. As the manners of the people have improved, there has become less and less cruelty in the joke. All the old, rough "April fooling" has gone, and one does not hear so much of such jokes as "fetching the fiddle," "pulling the cat through the water," and so on. The first-named trick was practised upon half-witted individuals, who were sent all over the countryside to borrow an imaginary fiddle, the "joke" being that every man to whom enquiry was made should "send the fool forward." It is a kind of humour which in these days would seem a trifle thin, but evidently Tim Bobbin and many who lived after his day thought the idea very funny. "Pooin' t' cat through't waythe" was a different kind of thing, and devised to take the starch out of a stranger who was making continual boast of his physical and other powers. He would be told that there was a cat somewhere or other in the neighbourhood so strong that it could actually pull him across the canal, and when he attempted to treat the matter with derision, a bet would be made in order to entrap him. A cat and a rope would be found, and when back to back pulling commenced from different sides of the canal, the cat (with a little well-timed human help) would be pretty sure to be successful in jerking the strong man into the water.

These foolish contests were generally hatched in the public-house, but one hears little of them nowadays. Of course, every shop and factory has

still, no doubt, its own particular way of silencing the braggart and of making fun of new hands and apprentices, but there does not seem to be the same stupidity and brutality about the methods adopted. Like punning, practical joking is a form of humour that has gone out of fashion, and those who indulge in it are not very highly regarded by the community generally.

Nowadays, practical joking is generally left to "doffers" and choirboys, or some other of the juvenile fraternity with a reputation for mischief. The first-named, so called from their employment of doffing bobbins from the spinning frames, will, perhaps, never be reformed, and to illustrate their inherent wickedness it is told that one factory master was in the habit of administering some chastisement on any doffer he met in the factory yard, on the principle that if the lad was not then in mischief he soon would be!

The fun need not be brutal to be enjoyed in these days. One of the neatest things in modern joking that has come under the notice of the present writer was played in a certain town not far from Manchester upon a woollen waste dealer named Shepherd. This man, who did a considerable domestic bedding business, had one day evidently dined rather too well, for he was found late at night sitting asleep outside the door of his warehouse. Scrawled in chalk on the door behind him were the words:—

> While Shepherd watched his "flocks" by night,
> All seated on the ground!

The fuddler, in Lancashire as elsewhere, is the most inveterate joker. He adopts all kinds of ruses, especially with strangers, in order to raise "the price of a pint." Sometimes it is "weighing the poker," as in Waugh's Dulesgate story, and somtimes he will make the stranger "cotter out" as the result of some absurd and tricky bet.

One day an old man sitting in a public-house made a rather ostentatious display of a bright blue and white stocking he was wearing. Remarking what seemed to be his inordinate vanity, one or two of those present began to chaff him. "Yo' con say what yo' like," said the old man, "but I co' that a grand patthrun, an' I'll bet there isn't another like it i't reawm." "I'll bet thi gills round there is," said a young fellow who had been grinning at him. "Done; where is it?" said the old man. "On to't t'other leg," said the young fellow, triumphantly. "That's just wheer tha's made a mistake," was the reply. "I knowed tha'd say that," and the old man pulled up his other trouser leg and displayed a stocking all black.

Nothing pleases these taproom habitues more than to get the better of some stranger who considers himself smart. Those who go to smile at these "country clowns" and "bucolic wits" often find themselves "laughing on the wrong side of their mouths," as the phrase goes. In the presence of a commercial traveller who had gone into the taproom one night for a little entertainment, one old man let fall the remark that a goose was a very long-lived insect. The "commercial" smiled a

superior smile, and condescended to put the "yokel" right. "Well, tha can co' it what tha likes," said the old man, "but I know it's a hinsect." "Rubbish!" said the traveller. "Well, to prove it, I'll bet thi drinks round, an' thoose at's i' this reawm shall sattle it." "All right," said the traveller, intent upon teaching the man a lesson for presuming to doubt his betters. The old man gave the company a significant look and then said, "Honds up for a goose bein' a hinsect," and every hand went up. "Carried unanimously," said the old man, "Mine's a beer!" and in disgust the "commercial" threw down his money and walked out.

Sometimes it may be one of the regular customers who is "taken down." Once, during a talk about the toothsomeness of various kinds of fowl, a collier remarked that he could eat "owt wi' fithers on." A bet having been made, a man produced a shuttlecock and said, "Eat that!"

Sometimes, again, it is the landlord himself who is "sold." A number of canal boatmen "on the spree" found themselves at their wits' end how to obtain another gallon. Presently one hit upon a bright idea and called the landlord. "I'll bet thi a shillin' tha connot think on to say 'three matches' to three questions I'll ax thi." "I'll bet I con," replied the landlord. "Well, how owd are ti?" "Three matches." "And how mich are ti wo'th?" "Three matches," he repeated. "And what will ti tak' for a gallon o' ale?" The landlord made no further reply, but ordered in the beer.

In mentioning the various stratagems to get

drink, one is reminded of Jone o' Jeffrey's, the individual who tells the famous "Owd Bodle" story in Edwin Waugh's Lancashire Sketches. Happening to be a carter employed at a fulling mill run by a relative of the present writer, Jone has been the subject of many good stories of which Waugh, who only had an opportunity of meeting him casually, could scarcely have heard.

The countryfolk would at any time "sanner see Jone nor two pynots"—"pynots," or magpies, being considered exceptionally lucky when seen in pairs—for he had always some "crack" to tell or some new practical joke to retail well calculated to set the whole rural community shaking its shoulders. Although a simple, untaught countryman, he became known far and wide for his stories. One alderman, to whose mill Jone had to convey woollen pieces, was so fond of his quaint humour that he would often waylay him at one of his many houses of call, and at the end of the evening send him home in a cab, royally drunk, his horse and cart having meantime been despatched by a more sober medium. Jone was open to many temptations of this kind, and under the influence of much ale—he never touched spirits, and lived in an age when the brew was honest and homely—has walked in his sleep for miles holding on to the mare's head. "Nan," the faithful creature between the shafts, would trudge along tending the automaton at her side with a care which was almost human. Once, when a search was made for the belated Jone, he was found on a steep hillside between his master's

house and the mill, lying drunk and asleep between the front feet of his horse, the animal refusing to stir an inch lest she or the wheels of the cart should do him harm.

There are many stories told of the jokes he played in order to obtain the ale of which he was so fond. On one occasion he was ordered by his master to deliver a message at another millowner's house on his way back from town with the cart, and when he got to the place he was told to wait in the kitchen for an answer. Left alone in the room, Jone noticed near the fireplace a large tub containing beer in process of fermentation, and close by a fine cat basking in the glow of the fire. He looked at the liquor longingly, and in a moment had resolved upon an ingenious scheme for tasting the brew. Stepping over to the tub, he took two handfuls of the foaming yeast from the surface of the ale and besmeared the cat all over, just having time to get back to his seat before the door opened again. It was the mistress of the house who had returned with his answer.

"Eh, missis!" burst out Jone, the moment he saw her, "It's a rare good job 'I wur here. Yo're cat would ha' bin drown't i' two minutes but for me."

The mistress looked at the cat steaming on the hearth and said, "You surely don't mean to say the cat has been in the liquor?"

"Well, look at it. What's it look like?" replied the artful carter.

The lady stared for a moment at the innocent

animal and said, "Well, I don't know what I shall have to do. My husband and sons wouldn't touch a drop of it if they knew that either a cat or anything else had been in it. I shall have to pour it all away and make some fresh."

"But yo' dunnot m'yen to say yo'd throw good ale away just becose a cat had bin in it, dun yo'?" asked Jone. "Beside, they'd never know, would they?"

"Oh, I couldn't cheat them like that. No; it will all have to be poured down the gutter."

Jone hypocritically tried to argue with the good lady against such a waste of good drinking stuff, but she was firm in her resolve.

"Nay; before yo' shall do that I'll tak' it whoam an' sup it mysel'," said he at length.

The good woman for a moment had some doubts in her mind as to whether she ought to allow any other mortal to drink the contaminated beer, but Jone's "flageing tongue" finally got the better of her scruples, and, eventually, a number of bottles having been found, he drove away with the whole of the month's brew on his cart.

There is another and milder form of joking of which Lancashire people seem especially fond. It might be described as the "catch," for it consists simply of getting the better of another person by some verbal trick, and raising a laugh at that person's expense. It is, of course, common everywhere, but it would appear to particularly suit the Lancashire temperament.

"Han yo' yheard t' latest?" asked a Blackburn man of a number of fellows with whom he was chatting. "'Red Eighty'" (mentioning a local policeman notorious for his giant strength and the way he is able to keep order in a certain rowdy district) "wor fun' strapped to a lamp at hawve-past two this mornin' i' Syke Street." "By gum, it mut ha' takken a lot on um to strap him," said one; "I'll bet he marked one or two on um afore they geet him fast," said another; while a third asked, "Heawevver did it happen?" "Yigh," said the first man, "it's true enough. Yo' seen, it wor like this; they fun' him strapped to his own lamp!"

Though often told in Lancashire, it would be difficult to name the "port of origin" of the story told of the new curate, who was asked to publicly pray for Lucy Gray. When he had done so for several Sundays in succession, he was told he might stop, as the mare had done what was wanted, having won the steeplechase by a length and a half!

Another story of this character is told of two factory chaps who went up to a farmer who was showing a pig at a fat stock show.

"By gum," said one of the men, "that's a fine pig. Yo' ought to get t' fust prize wi' that."

"What does ta know about judgin' pigs," said the farmer, "Tha looks as if tha'd be a better judge ov a pint pot."

"Well," said the factory hand, "I'll tell thi what I'll do. I'll bet thi two bob I'll guess as near to't weight on it as tha does."

"Done!" said the farmer.

"Well, what does ta guess it is?"

"Twenty-five score," said the farmer.

"Well, I'll say it's twenty-five score," said the factory chap. "So tha sees I've won t' bet. I've guessed as nee as tha's done!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LIGHT SIDE OF BURIAL.

THERE is a saying in the North Country that there are two occasions when a person is sure to be talked about—when he is being wedded and when he is being buried. Of the two, the burial is certainly the more interesting to the general community, and, strange as it may seem, provides almost as much entertainment. At all events, more people are directly concerned, for the event, particularly in the country parts with which the writer is more intimately acquainted, is one that calls out all that latent Celtic spirit which revels in extremes of feeling, and shows the native first as an unequalled mourner and then as one who can quickly set aside his grief and make the best of a sad and inevitable circumstance. Anyone who has attended a Lancashire funeral of the old sort, will have been amazed at the apparent lack of feeling shown immediately the body has been consigned to the ground; but on reflection, it may be the truest philosophy to follow the example of the military, whose invariable custom is to play a solemn dirge when starting off to bury a comrade, and to make the return journey to the inspiriting strains of a quick-step.

People in the North like to linger over the obsequies of a relative or friend, and until quite recently it was no uncommon thing for eight or ten days to elapse before burial. For one thing, it used to take much longer than at present to communicate

with relatives and friends at a distance. And, be it remarked, all who had the remotest connection by blood with the lately departed had without fail to be bidden to the last rites; the pains and penalties for overlooking even "forty-first cousins" were such as few would care to risk. Many a family feud has rested on no more serious basis, and vows have been taken never to speak to or acknowledge in any way during the rest of a lifetime a relative who has thus, consciously or unconsciously, slighted another. The result of this custom was that a funeral became a great undertaking whether the immediate relatives were or were not in favour of a great display—and usually, it must be admitted, there was no disposition to shirk duties which afforded such opportunities for a gathering of the clan. The writer himself on one occasion attended a Lancashire funeral where the relatives alone numbered close upon a hundred.

Dr. Whitaker, the historian, speaking of the Lancashire gentry, remarks that in the old days "It required the economy of half a life to enable men in this rank to afford to die, for their funerals were scenes of prodigality not to be described." Even so it has been with the lower classes in a more recent time, and people, in addition to impoverishing themselves by providing a great feast, have been in the habit of laying a whole neighbourhood under contribution in order to do the thing well. For instance, it was manifestly impossible to house such a crowd as the writer found at the funeral mentioned above, but neighbours

threw their doors open with a joyful alacrity, and unearthed unsuspected stores of table and other furnishings from those deep and mysterious cupboards which form so important a feature of every old-fashioned household.

The neighbours, indeed, have also to be very specially considered at these North-country funerals. The very intimate ones come as a matter of course to wait at table and minister to the general comfort of the guests, but it requires a special council in solemn conclave assembled to decide what individual members of the surrounding community shall be "laithed"—you are never "invited" to a funeral. This "laithing" is apart from the bidding of friends and relatives; the neighbours do not go to the burial place and witness the interment, but have a part in the entertainment, for no other reason, apparently, than that there shall be no ground for ill-feeling anywhere. The guests, indeed, never see them, as the neighbours come into the house during the absence of the mourners at church, and after being regaled with high tea disappear behind their own window curtains before the "burying folk" return.

Many of the things done at these funerals in country villages a generation ago, and, no doubt, can be found in isolated places still, were very curious. On arrival at the house, one was offered wine and biscuit, or, should one be an abstainer, the drink would be lemonade poured out of large, old-fashioned jugs with handles entwined with the peel of the lemon, cut corkscrew-wise for the purpose.

This might be partly for the purpose of refreshing the traveller and partly to fortify him for the ordeal of viewing the body in the coffin—a duty not to be neglected. Then came the procession to the churchyard, two and two on foot, headed by the "carriers" with broad bands of black silk round their hats, the ends of the ribbons hanging down a quarter of a yard behind. In the case of a distant church and a heavy coffin, there would be eight or ten "carriers," sturdy men, and all as nearly as possible of the same height in order that the burden could be equally distributed on the shoulders.

The walking procession, one is afraid, will soon be unknown outside France and some other countries on the Continent, the people of Lancashire, as elsewhere in England, having to a great extent "improved" on a custom beautiful in its simplicity by introducing into country parts as well as into towns the regulation carriages with black horses, and also that atrocity, the black-winged hearse. There was something infinitely touching about that last walk; and the kindly services of neighbours and friends, performing offices now entrusted to alien hands, gave a dignity and affectionate interest to the occasion quite unknown in these more sophisticated days.

Once having fulfilled their duty to the late lamented, to the best of their ability and perhaps with a quite unjustifiable lavishness, the "burying folk" would on the way home recover their spirits in quite a marvellous fashion. It would be more than likely that the handkerchiefs which had so

recently done duty in drying tears of heartfelt sorrow, would again be required for the *lachryma ridere*. There is bound to be some irresistible humorist in such a gathering of Lancashire folk, and he is bound to feel called upon to try and cheer up the company by retailing odd stories of the person just laid to rest. The writer has heard a funeral party on the return journey freely discuss the matrimonial prospects of the recently bereaved. Being quite convinced that the person would "clog again," they ran over the list of eligible acquaintances, and decided which would be the best second venture when the surviving one had put in a decent spell of lamentation for the "old un."

All this before the house has been reached, so that one can well understand the ultimate state of mind of the company when, after a huge tea of beef and ham and tongue, not to mention an infinite variety of cakes and pasties, the women-folk settle down to gossip and the men gather around the fire with long churchwarden pipes and "something short" at their elbows. To some people there is no sort of ceremony more welcome than the one that is generally epitomised as consisting of "current loaf and slow walking."

There is, however, just one more duty to be performed, and that is to attend the following Sunday at the church where the burial has taken place. This is evidently a custom belonging to the old days of Roman Catholicism, but the most pronounced Anglicans and Dissenters seldom fail to observe it, and people who never go to church at

any other time will most religiously attend on that occasion, and parade at the same time the whole of their habiliments of woe.

The almost universal establishment of cemeteries has, of course, done a great deal to destroy the old sentiment attaching to the country churchyards, and funeral reform has put convenience and efficiency before everything else. There are, however, still some remote places where old tradition lingers, and to which people seem to cling even more closely as years go by. Such a spot the writer knows, equidistant from Rochdale and Bury, on the wind-swept slopes leading to the moors. A pride and importance is attached to that old graveyard which is never found in connection with the aristocratic tombs and landscape gardening of the finest cemetery in existence. The place is visited yearly by thousands at "singing days," harvest festivals, and other special occasions, but a great many of the people never trouble to enter the church, being content to sit and dream on the churchyard wall, or potter about among the graves reading the quaint old epitaphs and speculating upon the manner of men who lived in a past generation, and who now, maybe, have little between them and oblivion except the short and simple annals to be found on their headstones.

As might be expected in such a community and in such a locality, the stories that cluster round the old church and its graveyard are by no means all of the sombre order. The characters who have dug the graves and read the last words of hope and

trust over the bodies of the parishioners have been remarkable in many ways. One or two have come in for mention in the course of this book, and one parson in particular is well remembered yet for his plain dealing and his quaint and homely humour.

It would require a book instead of a chapter to tell of the "marlocking" and practical joking that have taken place in and about these Lancashire graveyards. There is one old undertaker known to the writer who is himself a mine of humorous things appertaining to burial. He is, for example, a careful student of the Registrar-General's mortality returns, and has more than once pretended to express regret that "we haven't had a good epidemic for years!"

Like so many of his kind, he is a jobmaster as well as a funeral furnisher, and one day a press friend of the writer met the old man and thanked him for a more than usually smart turnout he had sent on the occasion of taking a few friends for a drive.

"Aah, it wur noane so bad, wur it?" said the old man, with pardonable pride. "Dosti think tha could mention it i't papper?"

"Well," said my friend, "I am afraid I cannot. You see, it is hardly a matter of public interest, is it?"

"Nowe, happen it isn't," admitted the undertaker, "but tha met think on it some time when I fit up a funeral—a gradely slap-up doo, tha knows—an' say 'at t' carriages coom fro' Jones's Hemporium, an'

'at tha doesn't for't world know how he manages to do it at t' price!"

The same town that claims this worthy as a citizen, also boasts a gravedigger who is the despair of the local temperance people. He regularly has a pint of ale before starting for the cemetery at six o'clock in the morning, and from that time onward until the end of the day he applies himself to the business of drinking so whole-heartedly that he would have to employ a clerk to keep a true account of the number of his pints. He is, one supposes, a direct descendant of that brewer's drayman who said he was in the habit of having twenty-five to thirty pints some days, while on some other days he had quite a lot! When approached by the temperance people, the gravedigger was totally unmoved. "If yo' had to wortch at t' bottom ov a seven-foote hole o' day, yo'd want a pint or two, too," he said, sturdily defiant. "Yo' dunnot feel th' effects o' one pint so very long deawn theer."

The light way these men speak of their work, by the way, shows that the most serious things in the world breed callousness with familiarity. In the course of his duties on a Lancashire paper, the writer was once told off to enquire into the extent of the ravages of an epidemic that had broken out in the town. On the way past the cemetery, he called in to see if the effects of it had been especially noticeable there. "Aah," said one of the gravediggers, "we han bin rayther ov oather busier. I should think win made somewheer about forty holes this week!"

Individual preparation for burial is, of course, common enough the country over, but few make their arrangements so thoroughly as one lonely man in a village in Lancashire where the writer once lived. He occupied the upper part of one of those three-storeyed old houses formerly used for hand-loom weaving, and beneath him lived one of the shrewdest and most entertaining old Lancashire dames it has been his good fortune to meet. One day, on being asked how the old man was getting on, she replied, "He seems o' reet; but I haven't sin mich on him for a day or two. T'other day I stopped him an' had a chat wi' him about summat 'at happened i'th' heawse. When I geet up that mornin' I seed a big, dark place at t' top o' th' heawse (ceiling), an' as I stared an' stared at it, it looked to go bigger an' bigger. I could make noather yed nor tail on it. I knowed th' heawse wur noane damp, an' if it had bin, th' place I'm speykin' about would'nt ha' bin so dark colour't. As Owd Bob just lives aboon, I stopped him when he wur gooin' out an' axed him if he knowed aught about it. At first, he didn't seem to gawm what I meant, but when I took him in an' showed him he said, 'Oh, that's it, is it? Now I know. It wur yusterneet. I wur happenin' to varnish mi coffin, an' i' mi clumsy way I punced t' can o' varnish o'er. I didn't think it 'ud ha' comed through, though.'"

Old Bob not only had his coffin ready, but he had his gravestone lettered as far as a living man can. His wife had pre-deceased him, and when the

inscription was put on the stone announcing her death, he had had the words added:

Also of the above-named, ——— ———
Who departed this life, ,
Aged years.

It was always said, too, that he had actually paid the parish clerk beforehand to put in the age and necessary date when his death should take place.

Some of the older generation of Lancashire men and women say and do some of the oddest things in reference to these matters. Recently an old man living in a country district outside Rochdale went to the house of a friend of the writer with a document he had to sign.

"Yo' met lend me a pen for a minute or two," said the old man. "I've seeched heigh and low for ours, but connot find it. It wur allus knockin' about when hoo—(meaning his wife)—wur alive, but I've never seen it sin'. I think hoo mun ha' takken it wi' her!"

A story very common in Lancashire, and ascribed to more than one locality, tells of an old Blackburn woman who on her death bed took her husband's hand and said:

"I've bin a good wife to thee, haven't I?"

"Well, just middlin' like, Jinny, tha knows," said her grudging husband.

"Well, tha'll grant me one last request, I know."

"An' what is that?"

"Well, when I dee I should like to be buried i' Whalley, for I feel I should never rest i' peace here."

"Well, owd lass," replied her husband, "we'll just

try thi i' Blegburn fust, an' if tha doesn't keep quiet here, we con shift thi to Whalley later on!"

"Tha wouldn't care if I're laid i't cemetery, if I just put up mi arm every Friday neet an' gan thi mi wage," said one old man, aggrieved at his wife's lack of interest in him. "Tha'd say, 'Cover thisel' up an' lie deawn again,' I'll be bund?"

"Well," said the shrewish wife, "I'd goo for't brass, shuzheaw."

The stories of rapacious sextons are very numerous. It is recorded that one old farmer offered a sexton half a crown for having dug his wife's grave.

"I want four an' sixpence," said the sexton.

"I shannot give it thi," said the farmer.

"Then I'se poo't bloomin' thing up again!"

"The full amount was paid," is the laconic comment of the chronicler.

One gravedigger, remonstrated with for having overcharged for digging a grave, said, "Well, yo' seen, him an' me," jerking his thumb towards the grave, "had a bit ov a tiff a twothri year sin' o'er a watch I sowd him, an' I've never managed to get t' brass eaut o' him yet. 'Now,' says I to misel', 'this is mi last chance, an' I'd better tak' it!'"

The writer was present one morning at an Easter vestry meeting at which Canon (afterwards Dean) Maclure made a remarkable statement about some "rapacious sexton" who had formerly done duty at the Rochdale Parish Church. The canon was arguing in favour of certain alterations to the churchyard which would necessitate the taking up

of a number of gravestones, which in this yard are nearly all laid flat. "It will make very little difference so far as I can see," said the Vicar, "and nobody's feelings are likely to be much hurt. It is really difficult to tell where anybody is buried, for again and again we have come upon gravestones lettered on both sides, some sexton, when given an order for a new gravestone, having evidently gone to another part of the yard, taken up a stone, turned it over, re-lettered it, placed it on the new grave, and drawn the money."

As indicated in the earlier part of this chapter, there is, perhaps, no part of Great Britain, with, maybe, an exception in the case of some parts of Scotland, where people take such a melancholy pleasure in funerals as they do in Lancashire. The women folk, especially, love to congregate and talk of sick-rooms and burials, and the letters from home to wandering Lancastrians are brimful of graveyard news. With a certain class, everybody and everything seems to be discussed from this doleful standpoint. Some time ago, two old women were overheard discussing a certain Darwen parson. Presently one of the women summed up all his excellencies in one sentence. "Eh!" she exclaimed, "Russell is a grand burier!"

And in all their funereal gossip, one finds an undercurrent of thankfulness that the lately departed have been despatched with all due ceremony.

"Whaw, didn't yo' know 'at Owd Bill wur dyed?" one will say to another; "Yigh, they

buried him a twothri month sin', and they gan him a funeral fit for a king."

One old man the writer knows finished up his recollections of another worthy by remarking, "An' when he deed, we buried him wi' ham!"

In this connection, one may, perhaps, appropriately mention a modern custom which does not by any means make for edification. In some quarters, a sloppy sentimentalism has grown up which is positively nauseating to the older generation of Lancashire people. Of late, the working classes in both town and country have more and more shown an inclination to make a vulgar parade of grief on the anniversaries of the death of relatives and friends. To honour the memory of the dead is a commendable thing, but to go to the extremes adopted by some Lancashire folk at the present time is to make perpetuated mourning a byword with self-respecting people.

The custom referred to had its origin in an inordinate use of flowers at funerals a few years ago, one family vieing with another in its efforts to provide the costliest and most numerous "floral emblems" to heap upon coffin and grave. This idea was pretty and could be forgiven, perhaps, even if many people did impoverish themselves by a too lavish outlay, but like so many things that become the fashion, it was soon carried to a most demoralising excess.

Not to be outdone, it seems to have struck some genius to obtain a triumph over the mere flower collector by advertising his grief in the newspaper

columns on the anniversaries of the death of his kinsfolk. The notion caught on like wildfire, until now in some papers the weekly returns from this source must quite equal the revenue from the auction sales.

Some of the less blatant content themselves with recalling dates and addresses, with perhaps a sentence such as "Gone, but not forgotten," "Though lost to sight to memory dear," "Ever remembered," and such like, but by far the larger number break out into poetry of the old funeral card order, partly, it would seem, to impress their friends with the fact that they are sparing no expense, but really, if they only knew it, to show the world to what depths of ignorance and bad taste they can descend.

It is laughable to note the inconsistency of these misguided folk. They are, in the district the writer has in mind, Protestant to a man (or woman—and one is afraid the women are chiefly to blame for making the exhibition), and would be horrified at the notion of saying a Mass once a year for the repose of the soul of a departed relative, but yet they will annually print in a public newspaper a mawkish, semi-religious screed which not only costs them much more than any ordinary Mass, but is dictated by a vulgarity of which the hated "Papist" would be totally incapable.

It is not, however, to the absolute indecency of the thing, nor yet to the waste of money, that one so much objects—although the money, in all conscience, might in many cases be a great deal better expended on the living than the dead. It is the

knowledge of the fact that the splendid, self-reliant, self-contained men and women of a past generation should have been succeeded by sons and daughters so shallow-pated as to cry aloud to the world their specially-manufactured sorrows, and to call upon all and sundry to gaze upon them in their cheap and tawdry grief. It is a modern trait of character which, although fortunately only applying to a certain section, would have moved to contempt the strong, stern, Lancashire folk of an older day.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOME EXAMPLES OF LANCASHIRE HUMOUR.

Mr. Newbigging, in his little book of "Lancashire Humour," says:—"The present collection by no means exhausts the number of good stories that are to be found on Lancashire soil. It is highly probable that were half a dozen writers to devote some time to the subject they would be able to present a collection differing from all the rest in the characteristic anecdotes which they would select."

This is quite true; many books would not exhaust the number. From a plethora of good things the present writer has given many examples to illustrate the subjects dealt with in the foregoing pages, but he feels constrained to make note of a few more specimens of humour which more or less lie outside the scope of the chapters dealt with.

The quality of the humour need not be discussed. Sir William Bailey, of Salford, who has gained more than a local fame as a raconteur, once told the Association of Lancastrians in London that the Scotch had a great amount of humour but no wit, the Irish and Welsh had much wit but little humour, but thanks in a great measure to admixture with these races, the Lancastrian had both wit and humour happily blended.

One may not, perhaps, be able to accept all Sir William's broad generalisations, but one can with confidence go so far as to say that just as Ireland stands for light-heartedness in the countries

that make up the British group, so Lancashire stands prominent for humour and jocularity among all the counties of England. Sir William went on to say that the humour of the Lancastrian was the fruit of imagination, and imagination was genius. Between Wigan and Manchester, he contended, were to be found the soundest-thinking and the most genial men on the face of the globe.

The Collier as Humorist.

Sir William Bailey, on the occasion in question, told a number of good stories, and judging from the success which attended his various illustrations, one is inclined to think that a very large proportion of those genial men come from nearer Wigan than Manchester. At all events, his colliers' stories were particularly happy and hugely enjoyed.

In the old hard-drinking, wrestling, and dog-racing days the stories of colliers were particularly numerous, and nearly always to their discredit. But nowadays the collier has lost a good deal of his ancient glory, and as he goes silk-hatted and sedately to chapel on Sundays one can hardly find a single fault to redeem him. The anecdotes were nearly all of the type of that told by "Punch" some time ago of the Vicar who met a collier and took him to task for his extravagance in keeping a race dog when he had a family of little children to feed. "And what do you keep the dog on?" asked the Vicar. "Beef-steaks an' mutton chops when I con afford um," replied the collier. "And what when you cannot

afford them?" "Well, then it has to live t' same as us!"

But as we have said, things have vastly changed since colliers could afford to drink champagne and feed their dogs on the fat of the land. Now it is ale that is the standard tipple, and there is less brutality in the stories.

The fondness of the collier for a dog is proverbial. Some years ago a Liverpool paper told a story touching this point which shows the collier to have a very quaint humour. One Sunday morning in a certain Lancashire colliery village, a collier dressed in his best clothes, with fancy pointed clogs and knotted silk scarf, was seen going jauntily along wheeling a wheelbarrow.

"Wheer arti gooin', Bill?" called a man who was standing in a doorway on the opposite side of the road, idly smoking.

"I'm gooin' a walkin'," was the reply.

"Gooin' a walkin'!" said the questioner, in surprise. "But what arti doin' wi' t' barrow?"

"Well, tha sees," was the odd rejoinder, "I've lost mi dog, an' a felly looks sich a foo' gooin' a walkin' bi hissel'!"

A better-known story, perhaps, is that of the collier who was one day playing with a bull-pup. The young dog, mistaking the display of friendliness, suddenly took hold of its master by the nose, and the collier lustily howled and shouted for help. His son, attracted by the cries, went to see what was the matter, but when he saw the position of things he took a totally different view of the situation

from his squealing parent. "Dunnot tak' ony notice on him, feyther," he is reported to have said, "it'll be't makin' o't pup!"

The drinking stories are nearly all of the gargantuan order. They like to "sprawnge" about that worthy who had such a capacity for swallowing beer that when they once put a litter of mice into his quart pot he gulped the lot down, remarking afterwards that he had, when he came to think of it, "noticed a twothri hops!" And the other collier, who "if he had had ony moore mouth 'ud ha' had no face to wesh," is also often alluded to. It is said that he was one day drinking with a number of his mates when a man came in and said, "Come, chaps, sup up an' ha' one wi' me." There was a pretty general call for pints of ale all round, but when the redoubtable collier was asked what he would have, he varied his order by saying, "Aah, an' I think I'll have a mouthful of ale, too." "Nay, by gum, tha'll not," said the man who was treating the company, "tha'll nobbut have a pint, same as t'others. I've noane comed in for a fortin."

Stories of this character are very common in colliery and other districts. One day a Lancashire man who had lived in America and had cultivated rather expensive tastes on his travels, was met by an old acquaintance when over in the old country for a holiday and asked into a neighbouring bar to have a drink.

"What'll ti have?" asked the acquaintance.

"Well, I guess I'll have a brandy and soda," said the returned emigrant, affecting the drawl.

"I think tha'll ha' to guess again," said the acquaintance, "an' tha'll oather ha' to guess two-penn'oth o' ale or tha'll ha' nowt!"

A good tale is told of a collier who for the first time in his life was staying in an hotel.

The first night he had gone to bed rather the worse for liquor, and the following morning he pulled on his trousers and walked downstairs. Going up to the young lady sitting in her little office in the hall, he said, sans ceremony, "Wheer dun yo' wesh i' this hole?"

"Oh," replied the astonished girl, "you will find water, basin, and all you require in your bedroom."

"Wayther, did yo' say?"

"Yes, you will find some water on your wash-stand."

"Dun yo' myen i' that big krem jug, like?"

"Yes."

"Whaw, I supped that i't neet!"

Speaking of colliers and washing, one is reminded of a story told by Sir William Bailey of the time the new Public Baths were opened in Wigan. A certain Lancashire major, in a speech dealing with the advantages of the new institution, humorously remarked that since the establishment of the baths in the town "Friends met face to face who had never so met before!"

Another story of kindred interest was told with great relish at the time of the Boer War. Lancashire being the only county in England to send a full brigade of soldiers to South Africa, was naturally greatly interested in every event of the campaign,

but the story is worth recording as showing the cheery optimism with which, in spite of multiplied disasters in the early days, the outcome of the war was regarded in the County Palatine.

The story had it that one day Boer spies turned up in the dark region of Wigan—what they could want there is not quite clear—and that one afternoon one of the suspects was seen by a wide-awake detective standing on a pit bank gazing open-mouthed at the begrimed colliers, their work for the day finished, coming in cage loads from the bowels of the earth. He stood rooted to the ground until the last man had been wound up, and then hurried away to the nearest post office. The detective followed, and peeping through the glass panes in the swing doors saw the spy take a telegraph form and fill it quickly. Demanding to know afterwards what the man had written, the detective was told by the postmaster that the wire was addressed to Kruger, and read as follows:—"You had better stop the war, for as fast as you send them to hell in the Transvaal those verdomte rooineks are being wound up again at Wigan just as good as ever, but badly in need of a wash!"

Wrestling and pigeon flying have always been two pet pastimes with colliers. Some of the "wrostlers," indeed, have achieved national and even world-wide fame.

That wrestling, however, can have its humorous side was shown in the case of the great contest between the "Bilston Bull" and the Pendlebury collier. The Bilston representative had bragged

that he could beat any man in Pendlebury, but after a long and strenuous tussle with the local champion he was vanquished. Asked by someone who was not present which man had won, he enigmatically replied, "It turned out like this. At finish, I wor t' topmost but one fro't bottom."

There is a story told to show how casually and philosophically fighting is regarded in some of the colliery districts. One Sunday morning a collier's wife rushed out of her house and hailed a man who was on his way to church.

"Heigh, felly, eaur Joe's feightin' wi' another chap. Come an' stop um."

"Oh!" commented the stranger, complacently, "how long han they bin at it?"

"Hawve an hour. An' they'n knocked t' table o'er wi' o't pots on, an' brokken mi rockin' cheer. Do come!"

"Well, I'll tell yo' what I'll do," said the man. "Hawve an hour's noane long. Let um keep on feightin' till't sarvice is o'er, an' I'll stop um as I come back."

Some Old-Timers.

Some of the most appreciated laughter makers in the county are the old folks. When age and experience have mellowed their characters, the old men and women in Lancashire, especially in the country parts, are capable of such shrewd wit and homely humour as can scarcely be equalled for richness and quaintness anywhere. In the village

communities, one has met not one but a score of Mrs. Poysers and David Harums, and the "rough diamonds" who occupy positions of honour and responsibility in the towns are never-failing sources of mirthful anecdotage.

Some of the self-made men who have been raised to the mayoralty, especially, have provided amusement for the public. There is, for instance, the stock anecdote of a certain Manchester mayor and alderman whose duty it chanced to be to make arrangements for a visit to the northern city of the late Queen Victoria. The nobleman who represented her Majesty pointed out in the course of one of the interviews that owing to the Queen's age it would be necessary to have all the reception rooms on the ground floor, and that the climbing of steps must be avoided both at the Town Hall and elsewhere.

"Oh, that will be all right," said the mayor. "If we have them upstairs, there's a hoist (which he pronounced 'eyest')."

"A what?" asked the nobleman.

"A 'oist," repeated the mayor.

"I beg your pardon," said the nobleman, still puzzled.

"What he means, your lordship," said the alderman, coming to the mayor's assistance, "is that we've got a helevator!"

The story told by Mr. Newbiggin of "Jack" Smith, a former mayor of Blackburn, who shouted in court one day, "Heigh, policeman, hoppen them

windows an' let some hair hin!" reminds one of many quaint characters who have lived in the same district. The present writer himself, in the same court, heard a magistrate peremptorily order a defendant to "'liver up" certain goods he had in his possession, and has also heard many other stories of the famous "Jack" Smith.

"Jack" was mayor at the time Mr. Justice Wills sat at Blackburn to hear the election petition against Hornby and Feilden, and, of course, it fell to his lot to entertain his lordship.

When the judge and the mayor reached the Old Bull Hotel, "Jack," in his breezy fashion, turned to his lordship and said, "Well, shall we have a drink first, or what?"

"I think we'll 'what'!" was the judicial reply.

Later on "Jack" was asked how he was feeding the judge.

"Oh, he's gettin' on o' reet," replied the Mayor. "I've just left him to get his dinner."

"What have you provided?"

"I've just gi'en him a couple o' ducks an' a twothri peyse!"

Many stories are told of the uncouth table and other manners of these mayors. One yarn, the origin of which cannot be accurately placed, tells of a certain chief magistrate who, a few minutes before the time of serving the annual banquet, was found by a waiter alone in the dining room trying the edge of first one knife and then another on his thumb. The puzzled waiter hurried to the side of

the mayor and enquired, "Is there anything I can do for your worship?"

"Nowe, it's o' reet," replied the mayor, "I wur nobbut pickin' a knife or two. I wanted summat 'at wur noane so sharp, for I cut mi mouth last time!"

When the mayor of a place is either too respectable or so characterless as to be unworthy of criticism, the community will fix its attention upon some other notable eccentric, and make him the hero of all the odd sayings and doings in the locality. Such a one was a certain East Lancashire quarry owner, of whom scores of stories are told. One day, as he was walking along the canal side, a labouring man met him and asked if he could find him a situation.

"What sort o' job does ti want?" queried the quarry master.

"O, owt 'll do," replied the labourer.

"Well, come wi' me, then."

The two walked along for some distance until they came to a large stone lying on the path.

The quarry master stopped, turned to the labourer, and said, "Throw that into't wayther."

The man, entering into the humour of the thing, did so.

"Now, fotch it out again."

The man unhesitatingly obeyed.

"Now," said the quarry master, "tha mun goo whoam an' change thi clooas, an' come to't delph i't mornin' an' I'll find thi wark."

Another day, when this eccentric individual was at the quarry, a man appeared and asked one of the workmen if there was any work to be had.

"Goo an' see Owd Pablo," said the workman, using the nickname given to the quarry master by those engaged in the delph.

The man, who happened to be a very sparely-built person, taking it for granted that the name was all right, walked over to the master and said, "Mister Pablo, could yo' gi'e me a job?"

The quarry master said nothing for a moment, but looked hard at the man. "Tha'rt a gradely thin felly," was his first remark.

The man admitted that he was not among the "brawson" ones.

"I think," said the quarry master, "tha'rt one o't thinnest chaps I ever seed. Sitha, just goo an' ston' at back o' that pow, an' if I con see thi I'll gi'e thi a job, shuzheaw."

The applicant, having, maybe, heard something of the queer character of the man he had to deal with, went and stood behind a pole a little distance away.

"Aah, I con see thi," said the master with a chuckle; "I'll try an' find thi summat to do. But, look here, who towd thee I wur co'ed Pablo?"

"That man," said the thin individual, pointing to the workman.

"Well, goo an' tell him he has got the sack, and 'at tha's getten his job."

When he heard, the astonished workman walked over to the quarry master and asked what he had done to deserve such treatment.

"Tha munnot ax me," said the quarry master, with a look of innocence. "Tha mun goo an' ax owd Pablo!"

Some of these self-made masters are noted for their shrewdness as well as their oddities. It is told of a certain mill owner that he one day met one of his carters crossing the factory yard, and addressed him as follows:—

"Well, Ben, what's to do wi' thee?"

"Oh, naught as I know on," replied the carter.

"But what arti limpin' for?"

"Becose I've a nail i' mi clog."

"Hasti had it theer long?"

"A day or two."

"Oh, hasti! Well, tha'd better goo o'er to't th' office an' tell t' cashier to pay thi up, as tha con goo about thi business."

"Whatever for?" asked the carter.

"Well, a chap 'at 'll be so car'less about hissel' 'll be car'less wi' my hawsses, an' I dunnot want a hawss o' mine to goo about wi' a nail in it foote for a twothri days together."

Two little anecdotes will illustrate the character and humour of another Lancashire worthy, one personally known to the writer. One day, at the hotel at which he was accustomed to call for his "morning bitter," one of his friends tackled him on the subject of how he had made his money. "Tha didn't come by it honestly, tha knows," said the questioner, jocularly.

"Well, tha sees, it wur like this. I started out straight enough, but one day when I wur countin' up th' odds an' ends, I fun' out I wur makin' a mistake. I said to mysel' 'This'll do noane; I'se

be ruinated if I goo on at this bat.' So I decided to mix it a bit, an' I geet on better then. But, tha knows," he added, after thinking over the matter a little, "I mun say I like to be honest—when it makes no difference!"

In his younger days, he so far over-estimated his powers as to imagine that he could make a success of bookmaking—of the kind in which there are more odds than chapters. For a time he did well, but at length the knowing ones found him out and he lost so consistently that he gave the business up in disgust. One day, as he stood staring disconsolately at the pavement in front of his doorway, an old crony came along.

"Whaw, they tell'n me tha's gi'en up makin' a book, Ned?"

"Aah."

"An' how's that?"

"Well, tha knows, I fun' out 'at I weren't damned thief enough."

"Oh!" incredulously exclaimed the friend, "I thought tha wur!"

"Aah, an' I thought so too," was Ned's comical answer as he turned away into the house.

The doctors of an older generation, blunt, whimsical, good-hearted, would furnish a book of reminiscences in themselves. How they bullied, cajoled, and tricked their fractious patients, how they masterfully pushed their canes through panes of glass when patients refused to avail themselves of the fresh air they so much needed, and how, withal, they untir-

ingly devoted themselves without hope of remuneration to the good of the communities in which they found themselves placed, would all make interesting reading.

One of these men was one day met in the streets of Darwen and asked to subscribe to some public memorial it was intended to erect in the town. "Me subscribe!" said the old man. "D'ye know the people of Darwen owe me fifteen hundred pounds yet!"

The neighbourhood of Rochdale produced many of these genial autocrats, and Blackburn numbered one at least in the person of Dr. Morley, brother of Lord Morley, and well known as the ruling spirit in the English Football Association. In the great cotton town of North-East Lancashire stories of Dr. Morley are often recalled, and one in particular of how he once gave Mark Knowles, the great teetotaller, brandy flavoured with horseradish when he persisted that he would die of typhoid rather than touch drink.

Once when the doctor was a witness in an assize case, an inquisitive barrister sought to discover his religious beliefs, and the dialogue is interesting taken in connection with the popular notions held with reference to his better-known brother.

"Are you not an atheist?" asked the barrister.

"No; I am what is called an agnostic."

"Well, isn't that pretty much the same thing?"

"No," replied the doctor, "I am like little Joe in 'Bleak House,' I know nothink!"

People who knew his good-heartedness never

questioned his private opinions. He had his friends even among the lowliest. It is told, for instance, how he always gave the telegraph boys a tip of threepence every time they brought a telegram, although he lived quite close to the post office. One day he showed his trust in this useful juvenile fraternity by actually sending a telegraph lad to the post office to change a five-pound note, in order that he might be able to give the messenger his usual tip.

The doctor, who was very literary in his tastes and numbered Sir Henry Irving and many well-known men among his intimate friends, lived much in London in his young days, at the time his brother John was editing the "Morning Chronicle." In this connection, the doctor used to tell how on one occasion he discovered George Augustus Sala and George Meredith engaged at the "Chronicle" Office in the gentle art of tossing pennies into a pewter pot to decide which of the two should fetch the beer!

Juvenile Humour.

Those who have read Waugh's verses of "The Little Doffer" will be aware, also, of how much humour the perky youngsters of the county are capable. The urchin Waugh alludes to as "a lively cowt,"

> Keen as a cross-cut saw;
> Short yure, sharp teeth, a twinklin' e'e;
> An' a little hungry maw,

is, indeed, perhaps the readiest and wittiest of all. Few of the professional platform humorists but have

a sheaf of stories to tell of juvenile smartness and precocity, and mill managers, teachers, school inspectors, and all who come directly in contact with the "soaring human boy" in these latitudes, have hundreds of funny yarns to tell of his quaint queries and pointed answers.

There is a story told of an inspector who asked a class of boys to parse the sentence, "Hark, how the lark sings!" One lad said the noun was of the masculine gender.

"Common gender," corrected the inspector.

"That shows what tha knows about brids," said the lad, "it's nobbut t' cock 'at sings!"

Some time ago a bishop visiting a parish in the neighbourhood of Heywood was shown over the day school. A Scripture lesson was in progress at one of the classes, and the children were reading of Jacob's dream of the angels ascending and descending the ladder placed between earth and heaven. The bishop took the Bible from the hand of the teacher and devoted a little time to the class, stating when the reading was finished that he would be glad to answer any questions the children cared to put to him. After a moment's pause, a little boy put up his hand.

"Yes, my boy?" said the bishop, encouragingly.

"Please, sir, have angels wings?"

"Yes, all angels have wings," replied the bishop.

"Then why did they go up the ladder? Why didn't they fly?"

The bishop was nonplussed, and could only weakly say that we must all be content to take the

Biblical story as it was set down for us.

This, however, was evidently not very satisfactory to the young logicians, for one little girl put up her hand and said, "I know, sir. Them angels must ha' been i't mowt (moult)!"

It is said that a teacher in Oldham once asked during a history lesson, "What would Napoleon think on his first sight of Moscow?"

"Please, sir," replied one of the scholars, "he'd think he'd getten a suck!"

One of these youngsters addressed a sharp rebuke to a pompous individual who was on one occasion speaking to a Sunday school class on the subject of self-sacrifice.

"Can you tell me what has made me leave my snug fireside and come out into the cold to address you on a day like this?" he asked.

"Aah, I con," said one of the lads. "It's becose tha likes to yher thisel' talk!"

Another boy found the teacher very unconvincing during a lesson dealing with Satan, who, although chained, was said to be going about the world seeking whom he might devour.

"If I'd had to d'yel wi' t' devil, I'd ha' made a betther job on't," blurted out one youngster.

"Oh! what would you have done?" asked the teacher.

"Well," responded the boy, "yo' sen t' devil is held i' chens, but t' chen is so long 'at he con reytch round t' world. Now, what's the good o' that? If that's so, yo' met just as weel let the beggar run loase!"

A gamekeeper tells a story which will have found an echo in the breast of many a juvenile "creeping like snail unwillingly to school." Coming over a moor one day, gun in hand, he met a lad and asked him if he had seen anything worth firing at.

"I sin naught wo'th' makin' a dinner on," replied the youngster, "but there's t' skoomaister just rising t' broo, yon; yo' con have a pop at him!"

There is a touch of the pathetic about a reply once given by a lad to the question, "How much is it by train to Bowton?" the answer implying a knowledge which may have been acquired at the expense of someone near to him. "It's nowt if yo' goo wi' a bobby," was the reply.

The following is given on the strength of its having appeared in a Lancashire paper as an example of native humour, although one has a suspicion of having met it elsewhere.

In order to impress upon a class of children the nature of idols, a teacher, following the verses in the Psalms, said:

"The idol had eyes, but it could not——?"

"See," cried the children.

"Ears, and it could not——?"

"Hear," came the reply.

"Lips, and it could not——?"

"Speak," was the answer.

"A nose, and it could not——?"

"Wipe it!" cried one bright youngster.

One of the stock jokes of a certain Lancashire humorist was of a boy who went into a tobacconist's shop and asked for half an ounce of thick twist.

When he had been served, he threw down a penny and made as if to back out of the shop.

"Here, lad," cried the tobacconist, "tha'rt a ha'penny short."

"Nay," said the boy, as he darted through the doorway, "It's yo'!"

The following story, told by Mr. "Willie" Briggs, a former Member for Blackburn, is said to have had the surprising effect of greatly tickling the Marquis of Hartington at a political meeting in Preston.

"When I was a lad—a mischievous sort of a beggar, you know—I was very fond of a bit of a joke," said Mr. Briggs. One day I went into the shop of an old lady—one of those little provision shops we have in Blackburn and you have in Preston, too—and I said very simply, 'If you please, have you got any dry red herrings?'

'Yes, love,' said the kind old lady.

'Are they nice 'uns?'

'Yes, love, they are—very.'

'An', missis, have you any buttermilk?'

'Yes, love, we have—plenty.'

'Well—let 'em sup!'"

One day two lads were passing an auction-room in Darwen just as a pair of opera-glasses were being offered for sale. The auctioneer was describing the good qualities of the glasses, and holding them to his eyes, focussed them on the doorway just as the lads entered.

"Con ti see us, owd mon?" shouted one of the boys as he noticed the man's action.

Dropping the glasses, the auctioneer replied, "No, you are too insignificant."

"Hey, folks," retaliated the nipper, as he took to his heels, "dunnot buy um. They're no good if he cornt see us fro' theer!"

The stories of these irrepressible youngsters are countless in number. Some time ago a swell young Guardsman arrived at a certain Lancashire station on furlough. As he strutted proudly into the town, he espied a shoeblack, and thinking he would have a shine before going home, he went up to the youngster and placed his foot upon the box. The lad gazed for a few seconds at the vast expanse of shoe leather, and then in well-assumed excitement shouted loudly to one of his mates, "Sithi, Bill, look at this. I've getten a army contract!"

It is told of one collier's child—and it is hoped for the credit of the county that such manners are not common—that he caused quite a commotion in church one day. His christening had evidently been left rather late, for when the parson sprinkled the water on his head he yelled, "Give o'er, wilti? If tha does that again, I'll punce thi yed off!"

General Jocularities.

One finds it extremely difficult, under this heading, to know where to begin and where to end, so varied and so abundant is the material which could be included. One is also handicapped in other ways, for apart from the difficulty of tracing the origin of a joke, it has always to be remembered, notwithstanding what is sometimes said to the

contrary, that the humour of those speaking dialect is not seldom tinged with coarseness, and that for this reason it is impossible to tell some of the best and wittiest of these stories.

Still, confining oneself to what is representative and those which in cases can be authenticated, one finds the choice as confusing as must have been the domestic arrangements of a certain Wigan household. It is told that a widow and widower of that town, each with five children, got married, and that the marriage produced five more. One day the woman was overheard calling her husband. "Hey, Bill, come here," she was heard to say, "Thy childer an' my childer are feightin' wi' eaur childer!"

Taking a few specimens haphazard, the writer remembers a story told to him by a London friend who formerly lived in Bury. The members of a working men's club in that town on one occasion deputed two or three of their number to make an audit, but the amateur accountants found themselves unable to strike a proper balance. Although they went over the accounts again and again, an item of twopence remained which could not be accounted for in any way. After puzzling over the matter for some time, one of the men was struck with a bright idea. "I say, chaps," he exclaimed, "Let's put it down 'Audited and found correct, an' tuppence o'er!'"

Apropos of the passion Lancashire people are said to have for patent medicines, the following story will be read with enjoyment. Two old men were one day standing near an advertisement hoard-

ing upon which was displayed the title of the well-known picture, "Ecce Homo." After gazing at the words a little while, one of the men shook his head and was overheard to remark, "I reckon nowt on't. I've had mony a bottle, but it's done me no good!"

Many stories are told of the quaint way in which doctors' orders have been carried out. There is a venerable yarn of how a woman, not being able to get champagne and oysters for her husband, did the next best thing and procured him some "pop" and cockles, and there is another of the way in which a woman carried out the instruction to give her husband as much of a certain powder as could be got on a sixpence. On paying a visit the following morning the doctor asked how the patient was. "Well," said the wife, "he doesn't seem much better." "Did you give him the powder, as I told you?" enquired the doctor. "Well," was the reply, "I hadn't a sixpence, but I gave it him on five pennies an' two haw'pennies!"

An endless number of jokes are made to illustrate this supposed simplicity of mind. "Whatever shall we ha' to do when o't coal is finished?" asked a man who had been reading an alarming paragraph in the newspapers. "Whaw," replied his companion, "We's ha' to brun cinders, tha silly beggar."

Another of these stories tells of an old woman who took her Bible to a printer and asked if he would print it over again as her eyesight was not very good. He said he would, and told her to call again in half an hour, by which time he had got her another copy in larger type. "By gum!" she

exclaimed, "yo'n dun it reet weel. I never seed aught dun so sharp i' my life. Yo' printers are t' clivverest chaps I ever seed!"

An old man known to the writer one day walked into a dentist's shop in Rochdale and asked to be allowed to "try on" some of the sets of false teeth he saw displayed in the window. In this case, however, one doubts whether the action was prompted by ignorance, as the man had an established reputation for practical joking.

At Littleborough on one occasion, two old women put in an appearance to hear a performance of "The Messiah." After looking down the printed list of solos and choruses in the oratorio, one of the old dames was heard to exclaim, "Whaw, there's no comic!" evidently under the impression that no concert could be complete without a humorist.

A good many of these stories relate to music and musicians. Mr. Nelson Jackson, the well-known entertainer, tells a story of two cornet players in Bolton who were engaged to augment the band of one of the local theatres on the occasion of the visit of an operatic company. Never having met any Wagnerian music before, they were floored when confronted with a piece of music written in six flats. "What shall we do?" asked one, "I've never sin aught like this before. "I know," said the other with sudden inspiration, "thee tak' three an' I'll tak' three!"

"I thought you could play," remarked a conductor to a piccolo player who had been engaged under similar circumstances in another part of the county.

"Aah, an' I thought so too till I coom here," replied the inefficient, "an' we're both sucked, aren't we!"

A woman once bought a piano for her husband, who was "very musical." Subsequently meeting the man from whom she had bought it, she said, "Hey, eaur Bill says he con play on o't white keys now, an' he wants to know if it would do it ony harm if he played on't black uns too."

The mention of "black uns" and "white uns," reminds one of the vamper at a public-house "free and easy," who was baffled completely by a man who went to the piano and hummed over the tune of the song he intended to sing. After going over it again and again, he exclaimed, "It's no use! I've tried it on't white uns, an' I've tried it on't black uns, an' I've tried it on't white uns an' black uns together, but I cornt hit it. Tha mun be singin' between t' cracks!"

Another of these musical stories is told of two Besses-o'th'-Barn bandsmen who were up in London for one of the Crystal Palace contests. While strolling about the East End they came upon a sign over a shop written in Chinese characters. "What's ti co' them?" asked the one of the other. "I dunno," was the reply, "but I think if I'd mi cornet wi' me I could play it!"

Both pulpit and pew provide some good stories. Preston people tell of an old townswoman, a noted character, who was told she ought to prepare for the future life, having held out to her the awful alternative of the place where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Them may nesh um as has um, parson," was her unconcerned reply, "I haven't had a tooth i' my yed this twenty year."

"Hello, Bill, dosti believe i't Bible yet?" a man asked of another from Darwen who had become rather notorious for his fondness for quoting Scripture.

"Aah," answered Bill, "fro' back to back."

"Well, dosti recollect that verse where it says 'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him t'other also'?" and followed up the quotation with a blow on Bill's cheek.

Bill then promptly obeyed the Scriptural injunction, and received a second blow.

"Now," said Bill, "dosta recollect that verse further on where it says, 'For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again'?"

"Then," to use Bill's own words, "I up wi' mi kneyves an' knocked him down, an' into him wi' mi Darren artillery (clogs)."

It is told of a Lancashire man who went into a church for the first time in his life that he "stared wi' o't th' e'en he had in his yed" when he saw the parson in his full canonicals, and when he saw the choir rise all dressed in white he exclaimed,

"Well, if that doesn't beat the devil!"

"Hush!" said a man who was with him, "that's what it's meant for!"

A well-known Blackburnian character suddenly ceased his attendances at church, and the Vicar

called upon him and remarked that he had not lately seen him in his usual place.

"Nowe," said the man, "I'm takkin' yo're advice."

"Oh! what was that?"

"Well, t' last time I wur at t' church yo' towd us to watch an' pray. While I wur prayin' somebody went an' broke into my heawse, so now I'm stoppin' awhoam to watch!"

Another man, asked why he never attended church, said, "I've nobbut bin to't church twice i' mi life. Fust time I went they dashed waythers i' mi face, an' t' second time they teed a woman to me. I'll goo no moore."

Some amusement was caused on one occasion when a young blacksmith was being "teed to a woman." When the party reached the vestry, the bridegroom was told that the usual fees would have to be paid, and that they went to the rector. The bride, a bouncing factory lass, on hearing this said to her husband in a stage whisper, "Gi'e t' curate tuppence for hissel'."

In common with people all over the country, Lancashire folk are fond of saying sarcastic things about the local railway companies and the way they conduct their traffic. A group of women were one day talking about the length of time it had taken various excursion trains to come from Blackpool. "It took us about five heawrs to get whoam last Wakes," said one woman. "That's nowt," said another, "When me an' this lad o' mine landed, one o' them ticket-collectors said, 'Hey, missis, that

lad's moore nor twelve,' an' I says, 'I know that, but he wern't when we set off fro' Blackpool!"

It was in a Liverpool paper that the story appeared of how a cow had beaten an express train. The yarn ran that some business men were one morning greatly annoyed by the number of stoppages their train made on the way up to town. During one of the halts, one of the men asked the engine driver for an explanation, and was told there was a cow on the line. A few miles further on the train came to a standstill again.

"Whatever is the matter now, driver?" asked the exasperated individual.

"Oh," was the reply, "we'n just o'ertakken that cow again!"

Physical and other oddities also come in for good-natured satire. A number of saucy factory lasses were one day going the round of a fair-ground when they were accosted by a bow-legged circus proprietor. "Walk this way, girls; walk this way." "Eh, felly," shouted one of the lasses, "we'n bin tryin' to walk that way o' week, but we connot manage it!"

The story is told of another bandy-legged man who went into a tailor's shop and asked to be measured for a new suit of clothes. As the tailor was not in, an assistant attended to the man, but when he had got the measurements for the coat and vest he seemed at a loss to know how to proceed.

"What arti starin' at?" asked the customer of the confused assistant.

"Well, to tell the truth, I was looking at your legs," was the reply, "I've never measured anyone like you before."

"Oh, never mind mi legs," said the man. "Thee measure um straight, owd lad, an' I'll bend um mysel'."

"I feel like Lady Godiva at the end of her journey. I am approaching my close!" wittily remarked Sir William Bailey on the occasion referred to at the beginning of this chapter, and the present writer must, perforce, echo his words. One or two more specimens of the quality of humour known as "awvishness" will suffice.

It is said that a Lancashire man was once punished in a Manchester jail for offering a quaint comment on that ancient form of hard labour, the treadmill. "By gum!" he said to the warder, "if this devil had bin i' Owdham, they'd ha' had it turned bi power afore now."

A well-known Oldham councillor tells a good story of a Lancashire man who, having made a trip round the world, was one day regaling a party of friends with a glowing account of his sightseeing. His superlatives about exhausted, he wound up by saying he had missed nothing of interest; in fact, he had seen everything.

"Here, owd lad," interposed one of the listeners, "Hasti ever had delirium tremens?"

"No," was the reply.

"Well, if tha hasn't tha's seen nowt!"

Another globe-trotter from Wigan, mentioned by Mr. Henry Brierley, the County Court Registrar of

that town, was asked what had struck him most of all he had seen. He paused a moment and then said, "I seed some feightin' on Wigan Station just as I londed back, an' I think that took mi fancy moore nor aught else. It wur a grand seet!"

Mr. Brierley is particularly happy in these stories. He tells a good story of the "awvish" kind of a man who went to the works of a friend of his and asked for employment. The master tried to soften down a refusal by saying that he really had no more work to do than his employes could cope with. "Ne'er heed that," replied the applicant, "owt as I do winnot make ony difference."

Owing to gangs of rowdies having disturbed a series of temperance meetings in a certain East Lancashire town, an ex-policeman was engaged to keep order. One night, the lecturer grew very enthusiastic and loudly apostrophised water and all its uses.

"What is there finer for anybody than pure water?" he asked. "What will make our homes happy? What will make our homes comfortable? What will make our faces beam with delight?"

It was evident that the lecturer's language conjured up an entirely different beverage in the mind of the retired police officer. Before the temperance man could resume, he turned to the rowdy element and shouted, "Th' fust chap as says 'ale,' out he goes!"

The above story reminds one of the temperance lecturer and evangelist who exclaimed to his audience: "Now, I want all those who wish to go to

heaven to stand up." All in the room started hurriedly to their feet, with the exception of one who had dined a little too well and whose legs were not quite under proper control. When seats had been resumed, the lecturer again said, impressively: "Now, will all those who wish to go to —— (the other place) stand up." Unfortunately, by this time the bibulous one had managed to get upright, and noticing that the lecturer and himself were the only two standing, he gulped out sympathetically, amid silence that could be felt, "It's no use, owd mon, thee an' me are in't minority!"

Ever and always the Lancashire man sees the humorous side.

Two men out fishing wagered who would have the biggest "catch." The day being sultry, one of the anglers fell asleep, and losing his balance on the side of the bank tumbled into the water.

"Nay, Bill, win' ha' noane o' that," shouted his companion. "Th' bet's off. No diving in for um!"

THE END.